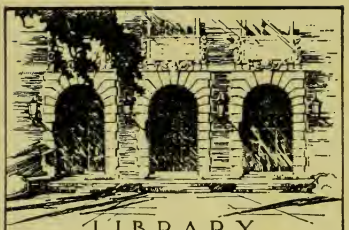

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THE

TUFT-HUNTER.

BY

LORD WILLIAM LENNOX.

"*Charlotte.* Besides, sir, I have other proofs of your hero's vanity.
"*Serjeant Circuit.* Cite them.
"*Charlotte.* The paltry ambition of levying and following titles.
"*Serjeant.* Titles! I don't understand you.
"*Charlotte.* I mean the poverty of fastening in public upon men of distinction, for no other reason but because of their rank; adhering to Sir John, till the baronet is superseded by my lord; quitting the puny peer for an earl; and sacrificing all three for a duke."

FOOTE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL III.

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THE TUFT-HUNTER.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Behold
How London *did* pour out her citizens.
The mayor and all his brethren in best sort!"

SHAKSPEARE.

"Men may talk of country Christmasses,
Their thirty pound buttered eggs, their pies of carps' tongues,
Their pheasants drenched with ambergris, the carcases
Of three fat wethers bruised for gravy, to
Make sauce for a single peacock; yet their feasts
Were fasts compared with the city's."

MASSINGER.

The course of our errant narrative now calls us to a scene whither the more refined and "fashionable" portion of our readers may perchance object to accompany us. But our

duty as recorders will not allow us to give way to a delicacy in which, to say the truth, we do not participate. A good dinner is a good thing, whether it occur in Eastcheap or in Eaton Square; and that particular good dinner which annually occupies half a dozen columns of the most fashionable of our journals, may surely claim a few pages in a "romance of real life," which is, at this present writing, fashionable only in prospect. Moreover, the "Civic Annual" in question (edited by the lord mayor and lady mayoress) is one which, if we do not greatly mistake the matter, will outlive all the other annuals extant, and may therefore well claim a few tributary lines at our hands, as part and parcel of the social features of those "times" which it is our business to illustrate.

As, however, the fact we have just cited—namely, the voluminous newspaper records which annually await the great city festival of Lord Mayor's Day, precludes our entering

into those minutiæ touching the precise number of tureens of real mock turtle and other "savoury messes," which are any thing but palatable *on paper*, we shall adopt the expedient of going a few hundred years back, and letting the curious reader know how their ancestors in the twentieth generation managed these matters, the rather that the account in question, though "written in very choice" English, is still inedited, and more than likely to remain so, unless by favour of the present appropriate occasion. The account, be it understood, is written by one William Smythe, citizen and haberdasher of London, and is dated in the year of our Lord, 1575. "And first of all cometh two great standards, one having the arms of the city, and the other the arms of the mayor's company: next them two drums and a fife, then an ensign of the city, and then about lxx or lxxx poore men, marching two and two, in blue gowns, with

red sleeves and caps, every one bearing a pike and a target, whereon is painted the arms of all them that have been mayors of the same company that this new mayor is of. Then two banners, one of the royal arms, the other of the mayor's own proper arms. Then sixteen trumpeters, eight and eight, having banners of the mayor's company. Then the bachelors, two and two, in long gowns, which bachelors are chosen every year to serve as gentlemen on that and other festival days, to wait on the chief magistrate and the company. After them twelve trumpeters more, then the drums and fifes of the city. Then they of the livery in their long gowns, every one having his hood on his left shoulder, half black and half red. After them follow sheriff's officers, and then the mayor's officers, with other officers of the city, as the common sergeant and the chamberlain; next before the mayor goeth the sword-bearer, having on his head the cap of honour, and the sword of the city in his

right hand, in a rich scabbard set with pearl, and on his left hand goeth the common crier of the city, with his great mace on his shoulder all gilt. The mayor hath on a long gown of scarlet, and on his left shoulder a hood of black velvet, and a rich collar of gold about his neck, and with him rideth the old mayor also, in his scarlet gown, hood of velvet and chain of gold. Then all the aldermen, two and two, all in scarlet gowns; those that have been mayors have chains of gold, the others have black velvet tippets. The two sheriffs come last of all, in their black gowns and chains of gold. In this order they pass along through the city to the Guildhall, where they dine that day, to the number of one thousand persons, all at the charge of the mayor and the two sheriffs. This feast costeth £400, whereof the mayor payeth £200, and each of the sheriffs £100."

Such was the Lord Mayor's Show three hundred years ago. On the occasion we now

allude to, in addition to the above, we must add a military band, whose fingers were so benumbed, that they in vain attempted to bring forth a "concord of sweet sounds," two men in armour, one mounted on a huge boned, deep barrelled, piebald horse, and the other on the identical grey, that, for the last ten years, has carried Massaniello in the ballet at the Opera House. Both these animals seemed to dislike the day as much as their masters, for they snorted and tossed their heads as the sleet struck into their nostrils and eyes, and kept tickling the susceptible hairs inside their ears; and, instead of the band of gentlemen ushers in velvet coats, wearing chains of gold, and bearing white staves, there were a dozen full-dressed footmen, with huge bouquets, powdered heads, and—umbrellas!

Proceed we now to the Guildhall, sparing our readers, as in duty bound, the usual *des-agrémens* of getting there, through the *levé en masse*, of fussy deputies and frowsy citi-

zens, with their fubsy wives, may-pole daughters, &c. &c.

The occasion of our requiring the reader's presence on this "auspicious day" was simply this—that our Tuft-hunting hero himself was present there—his dignity (especially where a good dinner was in the case) being by no means above consorting with any possible possessor of the title of "Lord"—even a Lord Mayor!—not to mention that he came as the shadow and echo of that "real" Lord (Lord Montressor), with whom we have so often had the pleasure of meeting him.

At dinner, Lionel Crouch found himself placed next to a lady, dressed in the extreme of fashion. She was evidently a foreigner, and as the Tuft-hunter was racking his brain to ascertain the name and quality of his neighbour, his curiosity was gratified by a portly, red-faced gentleman, who sat on the other side, begging he would take care of the Countess Grabowe Sandomir.

"She is a foreigner," continued the apoplectic-looking Alderman (a modern Falstaff, with all the gluttony and buffoonery of old Jack, shorn of his wit), "and probably don't know what turtle is. She'll find a little difference between *that* and her Frenchified soup-meagre!"

Crouch, disgusted with one neighbour, was now all attention to the other, and, turning to the distinguished foreigner, asked in tolerable French, though marred in a great degree by the English pronunciation—"Est-ce la première fois Madame la Comtesse que vous étes venue en Angleterre?"

"Oui, monsieur," replied the countess.

"Vous avez sans doute étudié notre langue," continued Crouch.

"Oui, monsieur, et je l'aime beaucoup."

"Comment trouvez vous notre ville de Londres?"

"Admirable; et par son étendue et par son opulence. J'admire surtout ces beaux

trottoirs qui mettent le piéton à l'abri de ces miriades de voitures."

"But," continued the Tuft-hunter, "Madame La Comtesse understands English." The lady smiled assent. "And do you prefer London to Paris?"

"Le Lapon préfère sa hutte à un palais."

Here Lionel Crouch was somewhat at a nonplus, for mistaking *Lapon* for *Lapin*, he could not quite understand the allusion. He, however, took courage, and continued—

"Are you fond of English society, countess?"

"Elle me plaît beaucoup, je vous assure; les Anglais ont tant d'égards pour les étrangers; ils s'en font une sorte de devoir."

The dinner passed off agreeably enough. The Countess imagining her neighbour to be a worthy citizen of London, kept periodically praising England as the only nation in the world which furnished the brightest ornaments to society in the bar and senate, from

trades and professions—throwing in an agreeable observation now and then, that, if such were the facility in other countries, the intellects of the people would prevent their availing themselves of it, and concluding with the remark of the French sage, who, comparing our population to our porter, said—"that the top was all froth, the bottom all dregs, and the middle the stout and efficient."

The toast-master, fortunately for Crouch, who could not at all understand why the countess should make such invidious remarks on the *noblesse*, now gave the health of the king and queen, the national anthem was played, and the Tuft-hunter, anxious to change the conversation, asked—

"Are you fond of music, countess?"

"J'aime la musique a la folie," replied the countess.

At this moment some juvenile choristers, whose nasal flats and squeaking trebles produced a noise bearing a strong affinity to the

mewing of cats, gave—"Here's a health to all good lasses." The weather, the company, the *on-dits* of the day, and the approaching ball for the Polish exiles, were all respectively touched upon.

"Have you heard poor James Smith's last epigram upon the Polish ball, countess?"

"Non, monsieur."

> "Aloft in rotatory motion hurl'd
> Through endless space the Poles support the world,
> But these our days a different law controuls,
> The world is called on to support the Poles."

"Ah! ver well! dat is var good," said the countess, with that peculiar pronunciation of English, which gives such a piquancy to the language in the mouth of a pretty woman.

This led to a discussion upon the subject of the Polish exiles, during which Crouch discovered that Madame La Comtesse Grabowe Sandomir was a French woman by birth, and the wife of a Polish nobleman, Count Jorre-

fowier Piatreswesh Grabowe Sandomir — a refugee, who, according to the countess's account, was considerably aggrandized by his misfortunes.

"L'adversité qui abat les cœurs faibles, grandit les âmes fortes," said the lady, in a dignified heroic style.

Crouch, of course, agreed to the truth of the sentiment. Here the toast-master proposed "a bumper, three times three — the ladies."

Immediately after which, a very loud "hem!" from the Lady Mayoress gave a hint to the ladies to depart, and the Appician rights being concluded, in which, to say the truth, most of the worshippers displayed a devotion and zeal perfectly astounding—the company retired.

Without being regularly handsome, the Countess Sandomir was decidedly what is called a gentleman's beauty; and, after all, without any disparagement to ladies' tastes,

the gentlemen are not the worst judges. Men are captivated by a thousand nameless attractions, which women cannot appreciate, judging, as they do, solely by the features. It may generally be set down as a rule, when females particularly "wonder what the men can see to admire" in any individual of their own sex, that she is a very interesting and attractive person. Now the glances which the countess occasionally threw from beneath her long lashes, so expressive and full of meaning, could hardly fail to make an impression upon any man who came within the range of so powerful a battery; though ladies might perhaps be inclined to misinterpret such innocent demonstrations.

Upon Lionel Crouch's entering the music-room, he observed the countess seated in an arm chair, immediately opposite to the door of entrance, while several other ladies, who filled the seats and benches round her, seemed all disposed to bend towards her, as their com-

mon centre. Indeed, her peculiarly elegant attire, as well as her whole air and manner, proclaimed her to be a person of first-rate fashion and consequence.

A gentleman with prodigiously handsome, dark eyes, mustachios, *favoris*, and a foreign order, leant gracefully upon the back of the countess's chair. He was evidently not an Englishman, and his complexion was almost dark enough for a Spaniard.

"Who is he?" exclaimed a young lady in a muslin frock, whose bright eyes were earnestly fixed upon him.

"Do n't you know, my dear," replied her chaperon. "It is the Count Grabowe Sandomir, a brave and unfortunate Pole."

"Oh, mamma, how beautiful, how interesting he is!"

The Tuft-hunter now approached the countess, and was in due form presented to Count Sandomir.

"I hope we shall have the pleasure of

meeting next week at Lady Beechey's," said Crouch, anxious to show off his intimacy with "lords and ladies" to his new acquaintance. "It will be a brilliant affair. All the foreign ministers will be there."

The countess replied, in a rather ambiguous manner, that they went out very little. The count's avocations kept him much at home. He was writing a history of the insurrection of 1830.

"At all events, we shall, I hope, meet at the Polish ball; for where is the heart that does not sympathize in the cause," responded Crouch, with a glance that was meant to be killing.

The countess now rose, and replying only by a little laugh and a bow to this observation, took the arm of Count Sandomir, who being remarkably tall, gave it her with a sidelong bend of his body, like a ship making a lurch on an awkward tack, but at the same time with such an air of self-satisfaction, that it was

evident he gloried in the constrained position which offered him an opportunity of displaying at once his gallantry and his noble stature.

No sooner had the Countess Sandomir departed than Crouch caught a view of the Marchioness of Dorville and her daughter. To be seen talking to so great a personage at a civic feast would, in the Tuft-hunter's opinion, elevate him in the eyes of all present.

"Introduce me to Lady Emily Dorville, will you?" said he, addressing Lord Montressor.

"I will first ask Lady Dorville's permission," replied the patron.

Montressor approached the ladies, and murmured a few words. A shade of displeasure passed over the countenance of the marchioness. Montressor returned, and told his friend that Lady Emily was engaged for as many quadrilles as she meant to dance; and then, rejoining them, entered into a languidly sustained conversation with Lady Dorville.

Crouch, nothing daunted by his disappointment, sidled imperceptibly within reach of the arm of his companion, through which he thrust his own; and having thus effected a sort of collateral acquaintanceship with nobility, and further dignified himself by standing for a few moments in the ennobling neighbourhood of rank, began to make sundry courageous attempts to edge in a word; innovations which were, however, resisted on the part of the marchioness with the most aristocratic firmness.

But here it may be necessary to give the reader some little insight into the birth, parentage, and education, of Count Jorrefowier Piatreswesh Grabowe Sandomir. If being born in a stable makes a man a horse, by the same principle the count was an Englishman; for he first saw light in Orange Court, Leicester Square. His father, Nicholas Schultens, was one of those German exotics who are hourly to be seen perambulating the Quad-

rant, Regent Street, and St. Martin's Street, where formerly dwelt Sir Isaac Newton, but which, like its neighbouring square, is now degenerated, and can only boast of *hôtels Français*, *cafés à la mode de Paris*, "silver pandemoniums," cigar divans; and other equivocal emporia of every description.

The avocations of Nicholas Schultens were mysterious, and not easily to be got at. It is, however, to be feared that the commodities he dealt in were chiefly contraband, and, like himself, very much in the fancy line—artificial flowers, cambric handkerchiefs, *rouge*, *rouge et noir*, smuggled lace, loaded dice, Chantilly veils, packed cards, *or-molu* clocks, fiddle-strings, and French millinery.

It was upon a fine evening in June that Nicholas Schultens strolled—"his custom always in the afternoon,"—to a celebrated café in the Haymarket. His costume was attractive, as will be seen by the sequel: glossy black mustachios and whiskers, a

braided military frock coat, a flashy satin waistcoat, huge Cossack unmentionables, ornamented with velvet stripes down the sides, and a profusion of Birmingham jewelry and Bristol stones. Upon entering the café Nicholas was struck with the appearance of Madame Ghistel Potée, a fine specimen of widowhood, "fair, fat, and forty." We pass over the courtship: suffice it to say, Madame Potée gave her hand and heart to the *beau Schultens*, and was transferred from her situation as *directrice* of the Café de Dieppe, to a snug fancy warehouse in Orange Court.

There the *soi-disant* Count Sandomir was born. Following his father's steps, he shortly became initiated in all the mysteries of contrabandism. But he had a soul above laces and millinery, and devoted his mornings to the shooting-galleries, and his nights to the fashionable gaming-houses. In due time he became a perfect *chevalier d'industrie;* and

thinking a count on the continent was like a captain in England — a good travelling name—he, from the known sympathy universally extended to the Poles, rechristened himself Jorrefowier Pietreswesh Grabowe Sandomir; and with that title, good looks, a large stock of impudence, and a few Napoleons, he took leave of his father—old *Nick*, as he was called—and quitted the foggy atmosphere of London for the more genial climate of Paris.

The closing of the Paris gambling-houses, and the active operations carried on by a vigilant police against the *maisons de bouillotte*, have disturbed many an existence, and turned into the streets a host of individuals whose art consisted in turning to their own advantage the chances of fortune—a large community, upon whom an outrage to international courtesy has conferred the appellation of "Greeks." The most substantial among the Greeks, being struck by the law's ostracism, have sought a refuge in bordering

countries, where Fortune — that blind goddess—still keeps open court for wealthy idleness, gilded vice, and arrant knaves, who are ever in quest of dupes. Greeks and professional gamesters, gamesters from taste, and gamesters from calculation, have either pitched their tents at Boulogne, Dieppe, Calais, and other watering-places, whither the deities of *roulette*, *trente et un*, *passe dix*, *pharo*, and *rouge et noir* have removed their subverted altars; or knocked at the doors of the *cercles* of the provinces or foreign countries, which their Parisian fame had not yet reached.

The *oi polloi*, the vulgar herd of Greeks and swindlers, have submitted to their fate, and, after some unsuccessful attempts at resistance to the police, have betaken themselves to many crafts. We must, however, add, that a very notable portion of the corps, a gentry of freer habits, have found means of procuring board and lodging gratis in Paris, at the expense of the state, in a number of houses, ad-

mirably kept, in pursuance of articles 401, 405, and 408, of the Penal Code.

One of the exceptions to the above list of gambling absentees was the Count Sandomir, who, despite of the law, still carried on the system of *private* play to a great extent. The countess, whose history we defer for the present, opened her house nightly in the Champs Elysées to a small, select party. Upon one occasion, the attention of those who were not playing was drawn to one of the *ecarté* tables, where high words seemed to pass among the ladies who composed the party. On drawing near to the scene of action, it was found that a direct attack had been made by one of them against the hostess, taxing her, in downright terms, with cheating. Expostulations and explanations were in vain brought forward to mollify the offended fair one, but with no success. The party broke up; and, the police getting wind of the affair, the fair occupier of the Elysian pandemonium, accom-

panied by her husband, broke up their establishment the next day, and shortly quitted Paris. But, possibly, before this history concludes, one of these worthy personages may again find his or her way into our pages.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Refuse a lord?—a saucy lady this!"
The Hunchback.

The second season of our heroine's *séjour* in London was now drawing to a close. It would be uninteresting to our readers to dwell upon that period which intervened between Vavasour's departure and the present time. The London season was over; the speculative were flying to other regions to prosecute new schemes; the disappointed to seek an antidote in forgetfulness, or other views; the weary, repose; the *blasé*, excitement; the sick, health; and the idle, pleasure.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans came under the latter denomination. A variety of gay watering-

places were named, at home and abroad: Dover, St. Leonard's, Brighton, Worthing, Margate, Hastings, Ramsgate, Southend, Boulogne, Dieppe, and Havre. Dover was too full; St. Leonard's too dull; Brighton too hot; Margate too plebeian;

> "Worthing's all tides, and all Cheapside's
> Mud carted into Margate;"

Hastings, or, as somebody has called it, a row of houses in a five's court, was an odious hole in hot weather; Ramsgate too exclusive; Boulogne too full of English *réfugées;* Dieppe and Havre too far distant; Southend too swampy and muddy.

At last Cowes was fixed upon, as some old friends of Mrs. Harcourt Evans's were to be there. Lord Montressor and Lionel Crouch were to come round in the former's yacht, and Sir Walter had promised to pay his niece a visit during her residence there.

We have been so occupied in tracing the

hopes and fears of love among the more important personages of our story, that we have shamefully neglected to record the progress of Lord Montressor's suit with Miss Callendar, and which, in his own estimation, only required to be formally advanced to be crowned with success, and was, moreover, peculiar in one respect, that, having no fears, it was equally destitute of hopes. He had, in his opinion, and in that of his friend Crouch, been very marked in his attentions. He had forwarded the handsomest bouquets to Medina Villa, he had been very *recherché* in his toilet before going to call or dine there, had always waylaid the ladies in their walks, and had, in short, been "very particular."

If a lover (we desecrate the term) could have gained a fair one as a snake is said to fascinate a bird, by pertinaciously gazing on her with great, stupid, greenish eyes, unquestionably Montressor would have been the person to perform the feat. But the art of fas-

cination seems lost, at least in this instance, for this most pertinacious of starers never produced any effect by his attentions beyond an occasional yawn.

"Lionel," said Montressor, one morning, "if you have finished spelling over the John Bull, I will give you a piece of information which will perchance surprise you."

"What is it?" he said, yawning and stretching himself, for the luxury of the easy chair in which he had ensconced himself produced a very lethargic feeling, and he had nearly fallen asleep over the paper he held in his hand.

"What will you say if I tell you I have made up my mind to marry."

This speech had the effect of completely arousing the amazed Tuft-hunter. He started up; but it was not with joyful emotion—far otherwise. A matrimonial *ménage* would entirely destroy his present comfort, his *entrée* into the house, his snug breakfasts, his ba-

chelor dinners, his choice suppers, and last, not least, in the toady's mind, the countenance of his noble patron would cease when he became a married man. In a moment all his future hopes were destroyed, and it was with a suppressed groan that he said—

"Well, I suppose I must congratulate you, though you are the very last person I should have suspected of committing matrimony; and, did you not look so grave and positive, I should scarcely believe you."

Montressor could hardly forbear laughing at the woe-begone manner in which his friend had received this communication; but, knowing his nature, shrewdly suspected the cause of his dismay.

"And who is the fair enslaver? who has captivated that heart of adamant?" inquired Crouch.

"Who? why, who should you think," replied Montressor, "but your paragon of premature divinity—Agnes Callendar?"

"Agnes Callendar!" exclaimed the Tuft-hunter, with unfeigned astonishment: a pause ensued, during which the noble lord took the opportunity of leaving the room.

"Agnes Callendar," soliloquized the toady; "Agnes Callendar, a nobody, a mysterious orphan——"

His reflections were put an end to by a summons from his patron to accompany him in a stroll on the promenade.

Some days had elapsed after this conversation, when Mrs. Harcourt Evans and Miss Callendar, who were awaiting one afternoon the return of Sir Walter from his daily ride, were startled with the sound of a carriage driving up to the entrance; and, the hour being too far advanced for morning visiters, they were somewhat surprised. After a few moments' delay, Lord Montressor was ushered into the apartment. His dress was more elaborately studied than usual, his chains, his rings, his studs, were costly in the extreme,

and it was in his most flowery style that he accosted the ladies.

"Shall I be held wholly devoid of good-breeding," he said, "if I own that my visit to-day is intended for Mrs. Harcourt Evans, with whom I have an important affair to enter upon?"

Here his lordship pumped up a regular tragedy sigh—Agnes rose to retire—another sigh from the noble lord, who muttered something about "energy to plead his cause."

On finding himself alone with Mrs. Harcourt Evans, Lord Montressor's wonted eloquence seemed entirely to have deserted him: he sat speechless. The matchmaking widow, seeing his embarrassment, broke the ice by blandly inquiring the cause which had procured her the honour of a private conference.

"A few words," replied his lordship, "will suffice to open my views, which are connected with your charming friend, Miss Callendar."

Mrs. Harcourt Evans was all attention.

"For a length of time, I have sought an opportunity of urging a suit whereon my whole chance of happiness depends; and if ever man's love were worthy, from its intensity, Miss Callendar will not repent the hour which makes her my bride."

Here his lordship seemed quite overcome with his exertions; but, after recovering himself a little, he continued—

"May I, at least, hope that you will accord your permission to my offering my hand to your beautiful *protégée?*"

"My permission you assuredly have," replied the delighted widow; "but surely Agnes herself would be the person best qualified to reply to your question on such a subject."

"Emboldened by your approbation, I shall venture to address your lovely friend, which hitherto the diffidence which ever accompanies real affection has prevented."

There was a pause. Montressor continued—

"I know the influence, the deserved influence, that you possess over Miss Callendar, and I would implore you to exercise it in my favour. I know that, to such a mind as yours, worldly advantages of wealth and title have no value; yet to see your young friend, her you love, the idolized mistress of a fair domain, might give you some pleasure, and—"

"Stop, Lord Montressor," said Mrs. Harcourt Evans, "you are mistaken in supposing that I should ever use my influence with Agnes on this subject. I have neither the right nor the wish to bias her choice."

"You have the power."

"I should be sorry to exercise it, for, in so important a step, what was contrary to her own unbiassed inclination could not lead to happiness."

This sentiment Mrs. Harcourt Evans delivered with great emphasis; for, although a matchmaker at heart, she was particularly

anxious not to appear in that character to the world.

"You give me then no support," continued Montressor; "you also are prejudiced against me! But promise me not to mention the subject of this interview; let me see Miss Callendar; let me hear my doom from her own lips."

Mrs. Harcourt Evans smiled, and said, playfully, "Your boon is granted."

"Thanks, thanks! May I see Miss Callendar to-morrow?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

There was a pause of a few minutes. At length, saying "At twelve to-morrow I shall wait on Miss Callendar," Montressor left the room.

The following morning, Agnes set forth immediately after breakfast to visit the cottage of a poor fisherman's widow. In the mean time, Lord Montressor, after expending an hour or two in adorning his outward man,

bestowing a considerable portion of Willis's mirific balsam on his really fine hair, and wavering long between an azure and a lilac waistcoat, descended to pass in review before his judge—the Tuft-hunter. He was, as usual, pronounced to be perfect: so he set forth with his friend's parting injunctions not to forget to lay great stress upon the peerage which he was about to offer with his hand.

He had proceeded nearly to the gate leading up to Egypt, when he saw Miss Callendar cross the road, and disappear among the wood. "There's nothing like a walk for these things," said his lordship as, dismounting, he gave his horse to his groom, and soon gained upon the unfortunate Agnes, who was making her way to the parsonage, to enjoy a quiet morning with the clergyman's wife, previous to paying her charitable visit. She could scarcely behave with ordinary courtesy, when she found her tormentor so near; but, resolving to make an effort to escape, she said—

"I think, Lord Montressor, you were on horseback; pray don't stop your ride on my account. I am going to the parsonage, and shall probably sketch by the way, and be very dull company."

"Dull!" said Lord Montressor, with a most insinuating look; "Miss Callendar's society never can be dull."

"I believe," said Agnes, retracing her steps, "I must return home now; the clouds are gathering; it looks like rain."

"Why, Miss Callendar," continued his lordship, "have you of late so studiously avoided me? If you knew the torture, the doubt, the fear I have endured for some time past, you would forgive me now."

After an ominous clearing of the throat, he proceeded—

"Your charms, your accomplishments, have made a deep, a lasting impression upon my heart, and nothing but the fear, by a too precipitate disclosure of my feelings, of losing

your society has prevented me from declaring them—from throwing myself, as I now do, on your mercy."

Poor Agnes had, during the beginning of this rhapsody, been seized with a strong inclination to laugh; but feeling, as it went on, the unpleasantness of her situation, she said, with a dignity quite thrown away on the *inamorato*—

"Lord Montressor, I beg you will make no further allusion to such a subject, nor persevere in——"

Here, fortunately for both parties, the appearance of Mrs. Harcourt Evans and Sir Walter put an end to this conversation, but not before Agnes had, with the greatest firmness and dignity, assured his lordship that a repetition of such sentiments would be the means of putting an end to the friendly intercourse which had so long existed between them.

The peer promised implicit obedience to her

wishes, which he gallantly declared should ever be his commands, and retired to communicate to his confidant Crouch the result of his interview.

We need scarcely add that the Tuft-hunter was delighted with his patron's failure, and congratulated instead of condoled with the noble lord upon the happy release he had experienced from the trammels of matrimony.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I saw her at the fancy fair!"

Cowes was now in the zenith of its season; its picturesque harbour was richly studded with gay yachts; the roads were graced by the presence of one or two of his majesty's ships, and various other crafts were waiting for a wind to wend their way towards their several places of destination.

Lionel Crouch now felt an irresistible anxiety to become a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron. There was something *distingué* in the button. And yet he felt a qualm before he could quite make up his mind to get himself proposed as a member. The causes of

this hesitation were threefold; first, the necessity of purchasing a yacht; secondly, the thorough detestation he had of sailing; and lastly, the fear of being blackballed. But what were these drawbacks when put into the per contra scale—the privileges, honours, glory, which his admission into such a body would confer upon him! This notion had taken full possession of his mind, and he screwed up his courage to open his heart to his noble patron, Montressor.

It was on a lovely morning, when his lordship and his toady were taking their accustomed stroll on the parade, that the latter ventured to break his desire to his friend.

"You cannot do a wiser thing," said Lord Montressor. "We have a ballot on Wednesday fortnight; and if you only get a qualification, I will propose you."

"Oh!" replied Lionel. "What, buy a yacht?"

"That is essential," replied his lordship;

"and she must exceed thirty tons. Now I recollect right, the secretary told me of one last night, the Sea Nymph, seventy tons, cutter-rigged, copper-fastened, splendid cabin, mahogany fittings, has won several prizes, and may be had a regular bargain."

"What may they ask for her?" inquired Crouch.

"Why," responded his patron, "nine hundred guineas."

"Nine hundred guineas!" echoed Crouch, with a grunt.

"I assure you she's worth your attention. If young Aitcheson had not been hit so hard at Ascot, he would not have taken fifteen hundred for her."

Be it known to the reader that his lordship's animated description of the beauties of the Sea Nymph, however nautically correct, were not altogether disinterested, the noble "puffer" having in his possession a cheque of Sir Harry Aitcheson's for five hundred pounds,

and which he trusted, through the sale of the yacht, would be duly honoured.

The friends parted until dinner-time, Lord Montressor to try and waylay Miss Callendar in her walk, and Lionel Crouch to pay his *devoirs* to Lady Elderton, who had paid him marked attentions during his visit to Cowes.

Her ladyship must pass with a very brief notice: she was a bore of stupendous magnitude, with four, tall, gawky, red-haired, penniless daughters. Still she was a "lady," and that title won the Tuft-hunter.

To account for a corresponding admiration on the part of Lady Elderton, we must here remark that Lionel Crouch was looked upon at Cowes as a tolerable good *parti*—his fortune had been considerably magnified, and the fame of his aristocratic friendships had spread like wildfire. The dowager, then, speculated upon our hero, as an excellent marriage for her youngest daughter, the lovely, fair Lavinia; and the young lady, being no-

thing loath, had struck up a flirtation with him, which was carried on whenever the tuft-hunting avocations of the latter gave him a release from his labours.

No sooner had Crouch entered the presence of Lady Elderton, who was sitting at the open window of a most romantic-looking villa near the church, with her third daughter, "the lovely, young Lavinia," destined, as the fond mother hoped, to be the happy bride of her visitor, than the conversation turned upon yachting.

The sun shone bright in a cloudless sky, and the sea sparkled and glittered in the breeze. Its surface was dotted with small boats hovering near the shore, while larger vessels were seen at a distance, dashing gallantly through the water, before the favourite gale.

"Why have you not a yacht, Mr. Crouch?" inquired Lady Elderton.

"You really ought to have one," chimed in Miss Lavinia.

"Cowes is nothing without it," renewed the mother; "and every one that comes here ought to belong to the squadron. We hear the members are going to get up a fancy ball. You must belong to it, Mr. Crouch."

This decided the question: a ball, and the Tuft-hunter to be left out of the list of patrons and givers of it would be a severe infliction. Crouch, with admirable adroitness, now commenced his reply.

"You are right, my lady; every one—that is, every one of the *élite*—ought to follow the adage, and do at Vecta — so Cowes was anciently called—what the Vectans do. It was only this morning Montressor insisted upon my purchasing my friend Sir Harry Aitcheson's vessel; and as I know, poor fellow, that he wants money, and that my friend, Lord Altamont, his uncle, will not supply him, I have just sent him a cheque for the amount

he asks. Before to-morrow morning the Sea Nymph will be mine, and, of course, at your ladyship's orders."

"How delightful! how charming!" exclaimed both ladies. "We shall certainly claim your promise."

Lionel now took his leave, having promised to meet Montressor and Westphal (so he thought proper to call the marquis of that ilk, although totally unknown to him) at four o'clock. On his way to the Parade, he met the former nobleman, and immediately reverted to his favourite, his all-engrossing topic, his desire to have a yacht, and become a member of the squadron.

"Well," said Montressor, "nothing can be more opportune: here comes Chaplin, Aitcheson's skipper; settle the affair with him, while I go and request Westphal to second you. Let me see — the Sea Nymph, cutter, 70 tons, Lionel Crouch, Esq. We shall soon enrol you as one of us."

And away departed the noble lord to the club house, and our hero to converse with a weather-beaten old veteran, the master of the long-coveted vessel.

Among the residents in and near Cowes, the fancy bazaar announced to be held there, on the 30th of August, in aid of a praiseworthy charitable institution, created a most lively interest. Mrs. Harcourt Evans had been unanimously elected one of the patronesses, in consideration of her handsome conduct in giving up her mansion and grounds for this truly charitable purpose. All the world determined to attend; and half the world gave themselves up to the making of penwipers and pincushions, and other "fancy" articles with as much zeal as if the fate of the nation depended upon this fancy fair.

Medina villa now began to give note of very great and splendid preparation for the approaching *fête*. The number of applications for permission to hold stalls so greatly

exceeded the number required, that the task of selection became difficult, if not impossible. So it was finally decided by the ladies' parliament, held at Mrs. Harcourt Evans's on the 25th of August, that the vote by ballot should be adopted; each lady so chosen to have the privilege of adding two to the firm.

The whole of the 27th, 28th, and 29th days of the month were entirely employed by Mrs. Harcourt Evans and her young *protégée*, Agnes Callendar, in receiving and arranging the numerous works of fancy contributed by the neighbouring ladies for the sale.

The thousand and one "fancy articles," of which the staple of the various stalls consisted, would prove (as the conjuror advertisements have it) "too tedious to mention." Suffice it to say, that the thirtieth day of August itself arrived in due course, and, fortunately, was as brilliant a day as ever shone. At twelve o'clock the public were admitted on the payment of one shilling each, and

certainly the scene that presented itself was, to use the saying of a staid old gentleman in a brown scratch wig, "well worth the money." The stalls, amounting to about five and twenty, were a succession of very handsome tents, gracefully hung with fanciful draperies, and festooned with flowers and laurel-leaves, against the sides of which were ranged the elegantly-decorated stands; while, through the whole extent, a space of nearly thirty feet was left for promenading.

At the extremity of the walk stood two booths, decidedly more distinguished by their elegant decorations than the rest. Over them appeared in letters, fancifully made in flowers:

MRS. HARCOURT EVANS
AND
MISS CALLENDAR'S STALLS,

and within the flowery shelter of one of these same pretty pavilions, round which were ranged orange-trees and other fragrant plants, the patroness and her young friend took their stands.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans, having a thorough contempt for sewing, working, stitching, netting, embroidering, and pasting, had devoted one of her booths to the sale of flowers, and the other to the sale of fruit, ices, and pastry. And here truth compels us to admit that the receipt of the latter stall was infinitely greater than any other, though presided over by a cross old housekeeper, aged fifty-four.

The "fair was at its full," and now there was an unabated display of charming white teeth, and one sweet smile beamed from the countenance of every sales-lady, as they exclaimed — "Oh, do buy from me! — thank you. We are quite giving the articles away. The materials cost more than we are selling them at."

A party of young "bread and butter" misses from Mrs. M'Fashe's polite seminary, dressed in white frocks, straw bonnets, and tartan sashes and ribbons, carried about lot-

tery tickets, five shillings each; the prize, which had occupied their talents for two long months, being a model of Carisbrook Castle, made in pasteboard, sanded over, real shrubs, well of water, and only wanted the live donkey to make it a perfect representation of the far-famed prison of the unfortunate Charles.

The sale, meanwhile, had more than realized the most sanguine expectations of the secretary, patronesses, and the venders of the Newport Charitable Association, and by three o'clock such a report was made of the general receipts, that the selling-ladies were waited upon by Mrs. Harcourt Evans's guests to hand them from their stalls to a collation that had been prepared within doors.

"Pray, Lord Montressor, be kind enough to take Lady Riversdale," said the hostess; "and perhaps, Mr. Crouch, you would undertake the Ryde stall, No. 14. Mrs. Brand-

leigh, and Countess ——, Countess ——, some foreigner—I forget the name."

Lionel Crouch flew towards No. 14—a live countess! the thought was ecstasy. But if the idea was ecstatic, what was the reality, when, in approaching Mrs. Brandleigh, a coarse, fat, vulgar-looking woman, with a voice like a harbour-master's, and a face like the Saracen's head, turban and all, and was about to give Mrs. Harcourt Evans's compliments and invitation to her and her partner-in-trade to accompany him to the collation, he recognized in the latter the Countess Jorrefowier Piatreswesh Grabowe Sandomir, clad in all the sombre paraphernalia of widowhood, and looking awful in all the majesty of woe!

Had Crouch been disposed to estimate the depth of her affection by that of her crape flounce and weepers, he would certainly have classed her, without hesitation, amongst the inconsolables: but the bloom of her cheeks,

for which she did not appear to be wholly indebted to nature, and a certain degree of coquetry in her toilet, seemed to intimate that she was not so completely engrossed by the memory of the dead as to be altogether insensible to the admiration of the living.

On seeing Crouch, she retired a step with becoming modesty.

"Countess Sandomir!" exclaimed Crouch, starting back with surprise. "And how's the count?" he was about to add, when the sable dress and sombre cap luckily informed him she was a widow.

Mrs. Brandleigh now proceeded—"Poor thing, she takes it sadly to heart; when I was deprived of the late Mr. ——. But, sir, we had better lose no time, all the places will be taken, and I am dreadfully hungry."

During this remark, Lionel had pumped up a sigh or two, and delivered himself of the following oration.

"You should not indulge such agonizing

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reminiscences. We are all mortal, and when once the sad event has taken place, grief becomes a very unprofitable occupation. At your time of life, and, allow me to say, with your personal claims—such a loss as you allude to is by no means irreparable."

The countess, meanwhile, was sobbing at the remembrance of her "brave *mari*, her *pauvre* Jorrefowier, her dear departed; such a figure!—such a countenance!—and, above all, *such* a heart!"

In the interim, Mrs. Brandleigh, who could not add patience to her other virtues, had marched off, leaving the Tuft-hunter in his glory. The countess's tears, like April showers, soon gave way to sunny smiles, and taking Crouch's proffered arm, she was conducted to the refreshment-room.

Here the champagne flowed freely, and Lionel ascertained from Mrs. Brandleigh, who seized upon him the moment he entered the room, that Count Sandomir had been shot in

a duel at Brussels by a young Englishman, and that Madame La Comtesse was a wealthy widow, residing for the present with her at Bellevue Villa, Ryde, where she had accidentally met her.

These and other details had such an effect upon the Tuft-hunter, that he forthwith made up his mind to lay siege to the widow's heart, or rather hand. Accordingly, the following morning, Crouch having borrowed his noble friend's phaeton, proceeded to Ryde to make his promised visit to Mrs. Brandleigh. He had made up his mind to ascertain from this loquacious lady all particulars as to the countess's jointure, and as he went along rehearsed some leading questions that would bring the affair to an issue.

No sooner had he reached Ryde, than he made inquiries for Bellevue Villa, and was conducted to a tolerable-sized house, painted white, with a green verandah. A few dull shrubs, variegated with stones in grotto-work,

adorned the plot of ground called the garden. On knocking at the door, which was answered by a huge foreign whiskered chasseur, dressed in green and gold, with an enormous hat and feather, and the arms of the Sandomirs elaborately engraven on the silver plate of his cross belt, the Tuft-hunting *aspirant* was informed that Madame La Comtesse was too much overcome by the fatigues and excitement of the previous day to leave her room, and that Mrs. Brandleigh was taking her daily stroll on the pier.

"Sensitive creature," thought Lionel, as he gave his card to the chasseur, and proceeded in the direction of the pier. Here he found a large party congregated round the band, which consisted of a wretched harp, two spasmodic clarionets, a relaxed violin, and a shrivelled-skinned big drum.

There was no difficulty in finding the object Lionel sought, for in a few seconds Mrs. Brandleigh came sailing, or, perhaps, to speak

more correctly, "steaming" away, dressed, evidently, from the "present fashions" in La Belle Assemblée. A bright apple-green coloured pelisse, most elaborately braided and tasselled, buff-coloured boots, a pink bonnet, adorned with feathers, lace, and ribands, a striped parasol, about the size of a candle-shade, composed her costume.

"My dear Mr. Crouch," said Mrs. Brandleigh, holding out her hand towards him, "how attentive of you to call! Our poor countess is quite overcome with yesterday's excitement; her unexpected meeting with a friend of her dear departed count has quite upset her. But I hope you are going to remain at Ryde; we want some beaux here."

"Oh!" said Crouch, looking very much obliged. "You are truly kind, but I cannot think of leaving Montressor and Heatherfield at Cowes. To tell you the truth, *Mont.* cannot sail without me—I always manage his yacht."

"Don't mention Lord Montressor, the countess has taken such a dislike to him. He seems so haughty and cold."

"You don't know him," replied Lionel; "he is an excellent creature, though certainly a little formal at first, but it wears off."

"Women," said Mrs. Brandleigh, and she suited her looks to the word, "are fond of spirit and vivacity; the days of sighing swains are gone by."

A pause ensued, but, as the loquacious lady was playing a game, it did not last long.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Brandleigh, looking at Crouch with an expression of interest, "I wonder you have never married, Mr. Crouch."

The Tuft-hunter was thinking of a suitable reply, when the lady continued.

"So gay, so gallant, and so devoted to the fair, I should think you had only to ask and command."

Crouch again looked pleased, but to get a word in even edgeways was impossible.

"I have been twice married myself, and I am quite sure where there exists reciprocity of affection, congeniality of taste, and sympathy of feeling, no other state can be so truly satisfactory. But you men are such gay deceivers, 'to one thing constant never,' as the divine bard says; you try everything in your power to turn the heads of our sex, without any serious intentions of matrimony."

This voluntary confession of opinions, delivered in Mrs. Brandleigh's most agreeable offhand manner, corroborated in Crouch's mind all his former belief of the interest he had created in the widowed countess's breast.

"Now, there's the Countess Sandomir, tender, shy, and retiring. She will scarcely speak to a man, although she has two men of rank dying for her. To be sure she has a right to please herself. She has a large fortune, a *cháteau* in France, the Sandomir jewels, and nobody to control her; and, *I* think, would make any man happy, if he only knew

how to appreciate her. However, we have no confidences, and I never venture to trouble her with my advice."

The lively widow seemed fully bent on exacting the attention due to her sex, and, after boring Crouch with the history of her early life and adventures in England, previously to her being sent out to the Indian wife market, began to amuse him, as she fondly conceived, with the virtues of her last "dear departed," and the numerous candidates for her widowed hand and her rupees.

Crouch shortly took his leave, with the assurance that in a few days he would repeat his visit.

Affairs were in this position when Crouch opened his heart, in a kind of hypothetical way, to his noble patron, with regard to the widow, to which train of thought he had been led by the conversation he had previously had with Mrs. Brandleigh.

"Are you going a-float to-day, my Lord?"

inquired the Tuft-hunter, as he joined Lord Montressor in front of the Yacht Club. "If so, you might take a cruise to Ryde."

"I think not; the wind blows too fresh from the west—quite a gale at sea."

The master of his lordship's yacht, who was waiting for orders, looked not a little surprised, for there was scarcely a ripple on the water.

"Drew," continued his lordship, "we shall get under way to-morrow at two o'clock, if fine. Remember to send for the ice and the pines. We shall have ladies on board."

"And remember," said the toady, taking up the conversation, "to strew the deck with lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets, that no rude savour maritime invade the nose of nice nobility."

After delivering himself of this quotation, Mr. Lionel Crouch and his friend Lord Montressor (whom, by the bye, although he "Montressor'd" and "Monted" him in his absence,

he "my lorded" in his presence to an immeasurable extent of vulgarity, not merely to toady the "nubblelurd," as some of our hereditary senators call it, but to be overheard by the passing crowd) proceeded to take a stroll through the High Street.

"I don't see," said Lionel, "why—I—should not do as well as my neighbours, in the matrimonial line."

And here the Tuft-hunter entered into an elaborate detail of his foregone adventures with the Countess of Sandomir, a repetition of which we will not inflict upon the reader.

"Have you ever thought of such a thing, Crouch?" said Montressor.

"Why," said Lionel, "I can't exactly say that I have; but I—of course, I dare say it means no more than what I always meet with—but I *have* thought there was something encouraging in the countess's look, her eyes—"

"Indeed!" said Lord Montressor; "besides, Lionel, she is rich."

"As Crœsus," said Crouch; "know her fortune to a fraction; did not overlook that in the calculation."

"Oh!" said his lordship—"then you *have* been thinking rather seriously upon the subject."

"Not seriously," replied the toady, "only I was considering that it would be a good match—not that I care for money—but still one cannot marry well without it."

"Then try the widow, by all means," said Lord Montressor. "But you are sure she looks kind?"

"Why," said Crouch, simpering, and affecting to look modest, "I can't say kind—but uncommonly goodnatured—and—laughs, and all that—and I read in a book the other day that if you can once make a grave female laugh, the day is your own."

"Provided always," responded his lordship, "that she laughs *with* and not *at* you: the difference is wonderfully great."

"The countess is not at all satirical," said the Tuft-hunter. "Shall I write a letter of condolence?"

"A few lines will not be amiss," replied Lord Montressor, "just to break the ice. Then carry it on with unaffected devotion. Let her fall into friendship; sympathize with her in all her feelings, most especially in the loss of her dear departed count; agree in all her opinions, but never seem to do so with any defined object. Thus, in a few weeks, you will gain her confidence. She will be convinced you esteem her, and are anxious for her comfort and welfare; and, thrown off her guard by your respectful behaviour, will begin to evince an undisguised wish for your society. She will at last feel that you are somehow, though she will scarcely define it, essential to her happiness, and when you have got her into this blessed state of amiability, throw off your disguise, like the hero of a melodrama, and profess yourself her lover. Then—"

"Ay, ay," interrupted Crouch, "that's all very fine in a play, my dear lord, and a very agreeable month's amusement it would be; but, in the mean time, Captain Broughton or Sir Blagrave Smith would step in and gain the prize. No, no—if anything is to be done, as Macbeth says, ''twere well it were done quickly.' "

"Then," said Lord Montressor, "if that's your view, you must fly a shot at the countess, and carry the day by a *coup de main*."

Crouch listened to all the advice of his noble friend, believing it to be given *de bonne foi;* and although there appeared difficulties in the process which his lordship suggested, to a mind like Crouch's, every one vanished in an instant.

Reaching the club, he called for pen and paper, and with the ready assistance of his noble friend, addressed a letter to the countess, avowing—not, it must be owned, in the most direct and explicit terms, but in a

tone and language which it was impossible for any lady to mistake or misapprehend—a devotion the most perfect and entire to her mind and person; and trusting to her kindness and consideration to pardon the haste with which he had made this communication, and hinting that his noble friend, Lord Montressor, took the deepest interest in every thing that concerned his welfare.

"That will do," said his lordship; "and now what say you to dining here? Heatherfield and Cavendish have promised to come."

"I should be delighted," replied the toady, "but I have an engagement of a week's standing to dine with old Lady Elderton; and Miss Lavinia has just written me 'a reminder.'"

"Nonsense, Lionel, throw her over—small room, hot wine, cold soup, and an underdone joint—here, write an excuse—'circumstances inevitable,' 'the arrival of a near relative,' 'raging toothache,' 'a sudden attack

of spasms,' 'violent headache'—or any other of the thousand natural shocks that 'flesh is heir to' will do."

"Why, really, if you are so pressing, I will with pleasure give up the dowager's feed."

And, "suiting the action to the word," he wrote a few lines to the lovely young Lavinia, regretting extremely that an unforeseen circumstance would prevent his having the pleasure of fulfilling his engagement, and begging she would offer his excuses to her mother.

"Could you lend me a seal, my lord?" said Crouch, who delighted even to have the temporary loan of a coronet.

"Waiter, a candle," exclaimed his lordship; "I'll seal them."

The light was brought; and as Lionel Crouch went to the window to mention to some idlers collected there that he was about to have the distinguished honour of dining with Lords Montressor, Heatherfield, and

Sir Harry Cavendish, the former noble lord slipped the note addressed to the Countess Sandomir into the envelope directed to Miss Lavinia Elderton, and *vice versâ*, and sealed them respectively.

The result of this practical joke produced a much greater effect than the noble mischief-maker had contemplated, as will be laid before our readers in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"It is good to be merry and wise,
It is good to be honest and true;
It is good to be off with the old love,
Before you be on with the new."

Old Song.

The morning after the incident occurred, which we have narrated in our last chapter, as Crouch pursued his walk towards Prospect Villa, the residence of Lady Elderton, where he thought it necessary to put in his card, as he crossed the road to avoid the gaze of the old dowager, who seldom or ever deserted her post at the window, and then only when relieved by one of her daughters, out rushed John, her ladyship's *head* and *foot*-man, a very abbreviated specimen of the genus *homo*, in his usual *négligé*, of cuffs up and stockings

down. Small as the imp was, however, his predecessor must have been smaller, for his clothes did not fit the present occupant of them; the sleeves being an inch too short, the trowsers not able to cover his legs, *en revanche*, however, the shoes were as much too long as the other articles of dress were too short; and were only kept on by a liberal allowance of supplementary *tow* thrust into each extremity.

Upon this occasion, the man of all work brandished a scented billet in his dirty fingers, which he thrust into the Tuft-hunter's hand, with the usual tug of the top-knot, and a grinning intimation that he was just about to take it to the club-house. The note was from Lady Elderton herself, expressing how happy she would be to see Mr. Crouch if he would honour her with a visit. The Tuft-hunter took the opportunity of some persons passing to exclaim loudly,

"Tell her ladyship, I will do myself the

honour of waiting upon her in half an hour; I have to meet Lord Montressor at three, and to show my yacht to the Marquis of Brierly at four."

Having, as he thought, surprised the passing "natives," by his intimate acquaintance with ladies, lords, and marquises, Crouch strolled towards Newport, to fill up the half-hour previous to his presenting himself at Lady Elderton's. On reaching her house, he was shewn into the little drawing-room, whilst her ladyship's factotum went to announce his arrival.

Lady Elderton was some time making her appearance, during which period the Tuft-hunter had an opportunity of becoming very intimately acquainted with the court-guide, the only specimen of polite literature which the apartment afforded; and to his horror he ascertained the important fact, that there were *one hundred and four* Smiths, inhabitants of private houses within the city of

Westminster and its suburbs, besides Whites, Browns, and Greens, *ad infinitum*.

At last the door opened, and in flaunted the dowager, with her cap stuck awfully awry, and evincing a laborious effort to shew that it had been tossed on without a thought, although in fact the last ten minutes had been devoted to the looking-glass—to the disposal of a stray ringlet in one place, and a dab of rouge in another. Her ladyship was accompanied by her daughter Lavinia, looking all innocence, simplicity, and in white muslin, and who, after a recognition and a sigh, modestly took her station on the window-seat, and pretended to be entirely engrossed with a volume of Mrs. Chapone's letters.

Lady Elderton's large eyes rolled with delight and gratitude at Crouch's ready obedience to her commands, although a shade of displeasure came over her features, as the Tuft-hunter bowed rather more formally than usual.

"It is impossible, Mr. Crouch," said her ladyship, breaking the ice, "to misinterpret any longer your sentiments towards *mi-daughter*," so Lady Elderton pronounced it; "and Lavinia feels greatly honoured at the preference you have shewn her."

"I—, I—," stammered our hero; "really, my lady, I—, I—."

"You are aware, Mr. Crouch," continued her ladyship, "that mi-daughters have very great expectations from their uncle, Sir Francis."

"Allow me, my lady," again interrupted the astonished Tuft-hunter, "to explain.—Your ladyship quite misunderstands my attentions, which are nothing—more—than—an innocent flirtation."

"An innocent flirtation!" exclaimed Lady Elderton.

"An innocent flirtation!" echoed her daughter.

"Lavy, my dear," said the agitated mother,

"leave the room; the scene will be too much for your sensitive frame."

Indeed the scene proved too much for her as it was; for, no sooner had she looked round, and perceived Lionel Crouch preparing to take his departure, than she threw herself into a theatrical attitude upon the sofa, hiding her face with her hands, and sobbing in a manner that would have melted a heart of stone, although it did not that of the Tuft-hunter.

"Oh! Mr. Crouch—I can never—no—never forget—my heart is breaking—oh no—it is impossible—but if—I fall a victim to—oh! oh! oh! I forgive—"

"I should not have judged, Miss Lavinia, from your appearance, that you were in any danger," replied Lionel Crouch, with the utmost *sang-froid*.

"How! Mr. Crouch, do you suppose I can survive the ill-treatment I have met with! To have my feelings trifled with! To have

my name made the sport of all the island—Oh! it is too shocking! No, Mr. Crouch, I cannot live."

And here followed another severe touch of hysterics. Crouch now rushed forward, and, ringing the bell, called for cold water, vinaigrettes, burnt feathers, eau de cologne, and every other specific for the recovery of *feint*ing young ladies.

The arrival of the footman and lady's-maid gave the Tuft-hunter an opportunity to retire, and he was about to wish Lady Elderton good-morning, when the hysterical damsel sobbed and screamed—

"Mr. Crouch, have pity on me.—Leave not your devoted Lavinia a prey to never-ceasing grief."

Such an appeal had a momentary effect upon the hard-hearted and faithless deceiver, and he listened to what followed with a feeling nearly allied to compunction.

"Mamma sent for you," she proceeded,

" to unburthen my—I mean her—oh—oh !—It is dreadful to find oneself in this world without a heart to sympathize in one's sufferings, or a hand to afford protection. But I have not deserved this. Oh ! oh ! Farewell, Mr. Crouch, for ever."

" Farewell, Miss Elderton, for ever," echoed the Tuft-hunter, as he bowed and retired towards the door.

Here Lady Elderton uttered a cry of concentrated rage, which so far got the better of her that she ceased for a time to play the actress ; then, turning towards the terrified Tuft-hunter, she indulged in a tirade of invective against him, declaring that she would make his villany known ; that she would sue him for a breach of promise of marriage ; that her cousin, Captain O'Hagerty, of the Cape-mounted Riflemen, should call him out, and that she would see these and other agreeable threats put into execution, " though she should die for it."

Crouch again attempted to break up this extraordinary interview, when Lady Elderton gave way to another explosion of anger, and, drawing from her reticule a letter, which Lionel immediately recognised as his own—

"Do you deny this?" said the dowager, her features again distorted and overspread by the livid hue of spite. "Is this your signature?"

Who can describe the Tuft-hunter's horror and dismay, when he saw that the letter the incensed mother held in her hand was the identical one he had addressed to the Countess Sandomir, and which, through the mischievous propensity of his patron, Montressor, had been placed in its wrong envelope! Although Crouch was aware that the contents of it were vague, the vision of the Court of Queen's Bench—Lord Chief-Justice Denman—Mr. Serjeant Talfourd—flitted across him, and he was, for the moment, completely nonplussed. Seizing the first opportunity, the

crestfallen Tuft-hunter rose to make his escape, under a volley of invectives from the irritated dowager, who still vowed vengeance against him.

Crouch lost no time in unburthening his heart to Lord Montressor, who felt deeply hurt at the scrape he had unintentionally got his toady into. After dinner, the two friends retired to take a turn in the cool of the evening, when they were soon overtaken by Colonel M'Murdoch, C. B., a tall, elegant, military-looking man, about fifty—the empty coat-sleeve, looped up to his left breast, showed how dearly he had purchased his distinction—and who delivered a message in due form from Captain O'Hagerty, for the next morning, at six o'clock, which, of course, was accepted.

Lionel returned directly to the hotel, to settle such matters as might be required, leaving the providing of pistols and arrangements to Montressor, who, in addition to

other precautions, ordered a boat to be in readiness to leave the island immediately, in case of any thing serious.

The place chosen was one of the green lanes, darkened with the luxuriance of foliage of different trees and wild shrubs — a spot better fitted to witness the meeting of lovers, and receive their sighs and vows, than the hostile rencontre of two young men, who, a few days before, were mixing together in social intercourse.

The parties were on the spot at the appointed time. A retired nook was chosen, the ground marked out, the opponents took their stations, and, the signal being given, they both fired together; Lionel discharging his pistol in the air, and O'Hagerty's ball passing through his adversary's hat. The seconds then interfered, and the belligerent parties left the ground without one word of explanation.

Out of danger, nothing could exceed the

joy of the Tuft-hunter, especially when the two friends retired to draw up a statement for the newspapers of the "duel in high life, between the Honourable Captain O'Hagerty, of the Cape-mounted Riflemen, attended by Colonel M'Murdoch, C.B., and Lionel Crouch, Esq., attended by Lord Montressor, caused by a misunderstanding respecting a near relative of the former's, the daughter of a noble house."

The feeling of gratification that the above paragraph had excited in the Tuft-hunter's breast was considerably marred by the following announcement that went the round of the press—

"An action for breach of promise of marriage is about to be brought by the Honourable Miss L. E———, youngest daughter of the Dowager Lady E———, of E—— Park, ——shire, against L—— C——, Esq., a gentleman of more advanced years, and well known in the fashionable society of London.

The damages are laid at £5000. The brief runs to 1000 folios, and the case excites the deepest interest."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Plutus appear'd, and said 'Tis true
In marriage gold is all their view;
They seek no beauty, wit, or sense;
And love is seldom the pretence;
All offer incense at my shrine,
And I alone the bargain sign."

GAY.

On the arrival of the post the next morning, the following letter was put into the Tuft-hunter's hands:—

"Monsieur,

"Madame Brandleigh ne veut pas—dat is, has transferra her pen to mee, pour faire—c'est à dire—excusez mee, saar. I am parfaite in prononce de Inglis languish—but no wreet it—not accoutumé à l'écrire. She tank

you, saar, for your yest-day visit, and vil be ver much happy to see you egain, in de mean time, Madame la Countesse Sandomir et Madame Brandleigh, prient Monsieur Crouch, de leur faire l'amitié de venir dîner avec eux Lundi prochain.

"Avec toute considération,

"J'ai l'honneur d'être,

"Monsieur, votre tres humble serviteur,

"EUGENIE SANDOMIR.

"Ryde ce jeudi."

To this elegant epistle was added a PS. from Mrs. Brandleigh:—

"The account of the duel has just reached *us*. *We* congratulate you on your preservation. None but the brave deserve the fair."

The Countess Sandomir was as thorough a coquette as ever decorated the pier at Ryde; and even during the few months that had

elapsed since "the widow's sombre cap concealed her once luxuriant hair," many aspirants for fame and fortune had been congratulated as likely to succeed to her vacant hand and heart. But hitherto the countess had preferred the reputation of having many adorers, to the reality of a second husband. Not that she preferred single blessedness or wretchedness, (as the case may be) but that no one had come forward with any pretension to that fashion which she so strongly coveted.

When Lionel Crouch appeared, the friend of all the aristocracy, the man of fashion, at least according to her ideas, her hopes, her wishes, if not her feelings, as we have already said, underwent a sudden and violent change. At first, indeed, she only looked upon him as an agreeable man of fashion; but more serious thoughts quickly followed, and the idea of a home in London, and the advantage of being introduced into the gay world, became one of hourly recurrence.

The countess was not a person to allow such a notion to lie idle, nor was Lionel Crouch a man to permit the gentle advances to intimacy of so great a speculation as the Countess Sandomir to stop short, or lead to nothing. The intimacy, therefore, did advance, and in Mrs. Brandleigh the disconsolate widow found a most able coadjutor.

Matters went on in this way for some time, and it was not a little curious to see the two lovers at work, each spinning a web to catch the other. All was smiles and good-humour. But no proposal was made.

In a small unpretending book of rare merit, entitled "Maxims and Hints on Angling, Chess, Shooting, and other Matters," and a perusal of which we strongly recommend to our piscatory and sporting friends, the author, speaking of a trout, says, "Never mind what they of the old school say about 'playing him till he is tired.' Much valuable time and many a good fish may be lost by this an-

tiquated proceeding. Put him into your basket *as soon as you can.*"

This advice, as regards the "finny tribe," coming from one of the most able, agreeable, and experienced *pens* of the day, seemed to the countess perfectly applicable to the affairs of humanity; and, accordingly, the anxious widow's disposition for playing with *her* fish, after having hooked him, was lost sight of in her avidity to "basket" him.

The triumph of the Tuft-hunter, who, like Hudibras's Cupid,

> "——— took his stand
> Upon a widow's jointure land,"

may be more easily imagined than described, when he found himself a permitted attendant upon the countess. To say that she was indifferent to the attentions of Crouch, which he now began to pay with some assiduity, were to be unjust to the lady: her vanity had been gratified by the homage offered to her charms, but her heart was not yet touched.

To say the truth, the hearts of a small portion of the fair sex are only to be effectually moved by a strong siege laid to their vanity, and the Countess Sandomir was one of this chosen few.

O Vanity! thou paradise of fools! young and old, high or low, peer or peasant, countess or chambermaid, all bow to thy empire!

The couple were now inseparable; Crouch's visits to the widow's cottage being in every respect diametrically opposite to those recorded as being paid by angels; for, instead of "few and far between," their recapitulations were so frequent, and so small a pause divided their continuance, that they might almost be said to have condensed themselves into one endless visitation.

One day, when the ladies at Bellevue Villa were lounging over their luncheon, the bell proclaimed a visiter.

"I wonder who it can be?" ejaculated Mrs. Brandleigh, at the same time running to the

window, and peeping through the wire blind. "It can't be Mr. Crouch, for he is sailing with Lord Montressor. What a beautiful phaeton, and *such* horses, and a groom with a cockade. Why I declare it *is* Mr. Crouch."

The countess approached the window, looked at the equipage that had drawn such eulogium from her loquacious friend, but said nothing. Mrs. Brandleigh now pulled the bell, as if the house were on fire. The long-legged page and Sarah the housemaid rushed up stairs with dutiful haste at the energetic summons.

"We are at home, Edward!"

"Yes, ma'am."

The page retired, and Mrs. Brandleigh darted off to her bedroom, to make some trifling alteration in her toilet, which she considered due to the occasion. The countess threw herself into a becoming attitude, arranged the folds of a splendid Cachmere shawl, hid away a rather dog's-eared volume of Paul de Kock's La Femme, le Mari, et l'Amant, and took up a splendidly bound Fenelon.

By this time the long-legged boy had opened the door, and the enamoured Tuft-hunter, with his body half inclined, entered, his countenance and manner evincing the deep sense of the honour he felt conferred upon him, by the cordial welcome of the countess.

"Accept this bouquet, Madame La Comtesse, a small offering, but of choice and rare plants."

"Mille graces," responded the countess. "Vraiment, Monsieur Crouch, vous êtes le génie des dames! Toujours aux petits soins pour elles, toujours des bouquets, des bonbons, des loges à l'opéra."

Lionel, anxious to show his intimacy with the distinguished foreigner, now proposed a walk on the pier, to which proposition she courteously acceded, and retired to prepare for the promenade.

The countess was absent some little time, during which period the Tuft-hunter amused himself with the volume of Fenelon. Not

that his thirst for knowledge led him to search within, for, be it known to our readers, that the whole of his attention was occupied without, in contemplating the magnificent coat of arms emblazoned upon the binding; and, while he was picturing to himself the effect the Sandomir arms, with their griffin supporters and lion crest would produce when united with his, the countess reappeared.

She was, to use her friend Mrs. Brandleigh's expression, "beautifully got up;" and, taking the aspiring Tuft-hunter's arm, and attended by the *chasseur*, they proceeded to the pier.

But we will spare our readers the uninteresting details of this and many other subsequent interviews, all tending to hasten the *dénouement* of this sentimental love-chase. They will doubtless have gathered out of the discourse of Mrs. Brandleigh sufficient materials wherewith to raise a suspicion of the course of life pursued by the Countess Sandomir since the death of the count. It will

be necessary, however, that we should state a little more in full, and yet briefly, the career of that lady during the last few months.

The countess, then, with a sum of three thousand pounds in her banker's hands, and as many more charms of person as her numerous admirers were pleased to ascribe to her, was resolved to maintain such a standing in society as her various claims seemed to warrant her in assuming. With this view, she made herself mistress of a small villa at Ryde, liquidated her more pressing demands just so far as to enable her to get deeper into her old tradesmen's books, and to whet the appetite of new applicants for the honour of her name in their ledger. Her arrival at Ryde was made known through the usual channel, the newspapers, and a few ostentatious charities, and subscriptions to the libraries, baths, pier, &c., had already gained her a considerable degree of notoriety. This was greatly increased by "the continental lady of high rank," as she

was called, appearing on the pier, attended by a huge whiskered chasseur and a magnificent bloodhound, one of a pack which the late count kept at his *cháteau* in France!

The countess now became the all-absorbing lioness of the pier, which was crowded every morning with anxious groups, eager to see if so great a character walked and talked like any other person. Her goings out and comings in were all equally trumpeted forth, and the town of Ryde was made happy in learning how many ices her ladyship consumed before dinner.

Amongst those most anxious to catch the eye of the great personage, was Mrs. Brandleigh, a lady ever seeking fashionable society, and who spoke loudly of her large circle of acquaintance in London. Soon after the arrival of the distinguished foreigner, Mrs. Brandleigh, having discovered that she once had the pleasure of meeting her at the Goldsmith's ball, left her card; this was immedi-

ately returned. Through this means the desired honour of an acquaintance was gained; and the countess, finding that her new friend would be a very useful coadjutor in her present schemes, gladly availed herself of every opportunity of cultivating an acquaintance; and, before long, they not only became inseparable, but agreed to divide Bellevue Villa between them.

This was no sooner achieved, than Mrs. Brandleigh affected an intimate knowledge of all the countess's past life, dropped obscure hints as to her motives in coming to Ryde, gave out that she was an immense fortune, possessed the most splendid jewels in the world, and was the owner of a magnificent *château* in France. She talked over the great lady's projects as if she was quite well acquainted with them, and even went so far as to call on the clergyman and ask him in what way a charitable gift, that was intended to be made by the countess, would be best bestowed.

The reverend divine, who had seen the two ladies at church together the preceding Sunday, made no doubt she stood in high favour with the countess, and entered into a long detail about penny subscriptions, pauper lunatics, Bell's schools, lying-in hospitals, dispensaries, adult orphans' societies, and finally gained Mrs. Brandleigh's consent to nominate the countess and herself as patronesses of the fancy bazaar to be held at Cowes for the Newport Dispensary and out-door relief association.

In the mean time, the love affair, as it was called by the bathing gentry of Ryde, was discussed in every promenade and at every tea-table. Such is universally the case in the gossiping, scandalous community of a small watering-place. In London, the circle is so extensive, that, although some hundred or two people whisper, and look wise, and turn up their heads, and nod and wink at each other when a flirtation becomes a little too evident, there are hundreds of others to whom it is a

matter of no interest; and, moreover, whatever people think, they are so occupied with their own affairs as to keep their thoughts at some distance from the flirters themselves. Within the confined precincts of a watering-place—and Ryde is not exempt from this failing—the slightest movement of that nature creates an universal sensation; all the worst passions of mankind, envy, malice, and jealousy, are concentrated in a small community of that sort, and the whole tribe of tabbies are in motion.

Such was now the case. "To be sure," says one, "the countess *is* an extraordinary person, not to see through Mr. Crouch's conduct—all for her money."—"Only to think," says another: "to give up Sir Blagrave Smith for such a man: it's monstrous."—"Captain Broughton will resent it," cries a third: "to be jilted for such a coxcomb."—"There are stories of certain meetings at moonlight," exclaims a fourth, "that do not redound much

to the countess's credit."—"Depend upon it," adds another, "that matchmaking Mrs. Brandleigh has brought it all about." Some shook their heads, and declared they would never believe in the marriage until the knot was indissolubly tied, while others chuckled as they said, "they always knew it would end in a match."

Lionel Crouch had certainly been acquainted with the Countess Sandomir more than a year; but, with the exception of the last three weeks, he had literally seen nothing of her. His pretensions, nevertheless, had been, it must be acknowledged, considerably encouraged during that short period by the bright sunshine of her eyes, and he determined to strike while the iron was hot. Having therefore "screwed his courage to the sticking-place" by the remembrance of the handsome jointure, the *château* near Paris, the splendid jewels, and last, not least, his anxiety to secure the prize he through life had sought—a titled wife—the

Tuft-hunter set off on horseback to accomplish it.

The Sea Nymph, under the command of Captain Chaplin, was ordered to cruise off Ryde, to enable its owner to appear before the widow in all the pride and pomp of an owner of a yacht. His boat's crew, sauntering in front of Bellevue Villa, equipped in fancy trowsers, shirts, and hats, with Sea Nymph worked on their breasts, would, according to our hero's ideas, produce a grand effect; nor did he anticipate a less one for himself, decked out in white, coarse, duck trousers, striped stockings and shirt, glazed hat, with a glass in his hand, and looking for all the world like the hero of a nautical drama at the Surrey Theatre.

On reaching the villa, he was, as usual, shown into the morning-room, overlooking the sea; and it was with no little exultation that he saw the Sea Nymph, her mast towering to the skies, and her ample mainsail swelling to

the breeze. On looking round the room, he found every thing much as it was wont to be—sofas, footstools, albums, guitar, music, but no countess.

"Madame La Comptesse will descend immediately," said the chasseur, in broken English, and he closed the door, leaving the Tuft-hunter to his castle-building meditations. At length, the door re-opened, and Mrs. Brandleigh, accompanied by the pale and languid widow, whose eyes were red with weeping, or strong-smelling salts, entered the room.

After the usual salutations, Crouch took the countess's hand, respectfully kissed it, and led her to the sofa. Her handkerchief was at her eyes; she appeared greatly agitated; and, although she made no resistance, she manifested no inclination to return the tender pressure bestowed upon her fingers. At length, she spoke—

"How kind of you, Monsieur Crouch, to come on such a day — the anniversary of my

poor Jorrefowier's death" (here she sobbed loudly). "Je ne pourrai jamais m'acquitter envers vous."

Here Mrs. Brandleigh, who had been all this time admiring the beautiful vessel, "oh la"-ing and "oh mi"-ing it to a fearful extent, accidentally (on purpose) left the room, giving our hero an opportunity of administering consolation to the widowed Niobe, now all tears. "Weep not, fair lady," he exclaimed,

> "The living claim some duty; vainly thou
> Bestow'st thy cares upon the silent dead."

After delivering himself of this quotation, the Tuft-hunter felt his resolution, like Acres's courage, oozing out at the end of his fingers; but, turning his eyes to a splendid jewel-case, which the countess had somewhat ostentatiously opened, to take out the "*portrait charmant*" of her dearly-loved, deceased count, his fortitude returned; Lionel "was himself

again;" and, working himself up into a state of amative enthusiasm, he exclaimed—

"It is impossible, my dear lady, that we can either of us any longer mistake the nature of the sentiment which we feel for each other."

The countess answered only by a deep sigh, which partook indeed of the nature of a sob; and, by the continued application of her handkerchief, it appeared that she wept freely. Lionel once more renewed the subject; and so skilfully did he manage her feelings, and bend her mind to his purpose, that ere long he saw realised the old French adage, at least as far as regards the latter, "Château qui parle, et femme qui écoute l'un et l'autre va se rendre."

"Oh, Mr. Crouch!" said the agitated countess; "I know not what I can — I know not what I ought to do!"

This was delivered with so enchanting a softness, that Crouch could do no less than go the right-ahead system.

"Say, beloved," (here the Tuft-hunter remembered the funds, houses, jewels, &c., and got inspired) "that I am not deceived in thee —that thou will be mine—

"'With life to keep, and scarce with life resign.'"

Here Lionel glanced at the barometer of the countess's countenance, to observe whether it rose or fell at the declaration of his sentiments, and was gratified at finding it "set fair." Looking up, and seeing those drops that had recently stood in the eyes of his mistress taking their course down her cheeks, he exclaimed, with fervour—

"Yes, yes! in those precious tears are the signals of pity; may I presume further to hope that love may yet find its way into that bosom where nothing but tenderness can reign? I see it, I see it! that heavenly smile, beaming through your tears, gives me ground for hope. Say but that you are mine."

He had taken the countess's unresisting hand

in his; and, as he pronounced these words, accompanied by an imploring look, and the tremulous and barely audible "Yes" had scarcely been pronounced, when her lover imprinted an impassioned kiss on those lovely fingers. The ecstasy of such a moment repaid all his troubles.

"Then be it so, Lionel," exclaimed the countess, after a pause; "my hand shall be, my heart has long been, yours."

For some minutes, the lovers sat in that state of mute and unspeakable delight, that it is hoped many of our readers have experienced and understood better than we can describe.

The happy and accepted lover now saluted the fair widow's forehead, the first kiss of affianced love, and departed, leaving her in a far more comfortable state of composure than that in which he had found her. Madame La Comtesse lost no time in communicating the pleasing intelligence to her friend that Crouch

had "come, seen, and conquered;" whilst he returned to Cowes in the highest possible spirits, at the prospect of being able at last to call a real and living countess his own.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"His fortune swells him—
'Tis rank—he's married."

MASSINGER.

The happy day for the marriage ceremony was now fixed. The 19th of September was to see Lionel Crouch the happiest husband of the happiest wife in all England. The Morning Post and Court Journal had teemed with the preparations for the wedding. They stated, "upon authority," that the magnificent *trousseau* was to "emanate" from the fashionable emporium of Madame Maradan; that the splendid carriage, on which the united arms of the Sandomirs and Crouchs were emblazoned, was being built by Messrs. Adams and Hooper; and that Messrs. Storr

and Mortimer were said to be busily employed resetting the Sandomir jewels, &c. &c.

These "puffs preliminary," which the fertile brain of the Tuft-hunter had concocted, wound up with the movements of the "happy couple" that were to be, and who, after a short *séjour* at Southampton, previous to their return to London, were to leave England for the *château* Sandomir, at Brevannes, near Paris.

The auspicious day at length arrived. As all weddings are pretty much alike, it is needless to say, that on this occasion there was the usual quantity of sighs, white satin, and orange flowers, and that, like all brides, the lady looked divine.

When all was over, amidst smiles, sighs, and tears, the party adjourned to a splendid breakfast at Mrs. Brandleigh's villa; Miss Selina Brandleigh, as one of the bridemaids, was called upon to dissect the cake, which very soon disappeared to form stuffing for

pillow-cases; the healths of the bride and bridegroom were drank with the usual honours; the former retired to equip herself in more suitable apparel for the journey and voyage; and, finally, a travelling carriage, with imperial, trunks, and all the necessary appendages, drove up to the door, and, after taking leave, the delighted Lionel handed in his bride, and seated himself by her side, in all the pride and pomp of a countess's lord and master. Whether his ambition is doomed, like every other species of pride, to have a fall, remains to be disclosed.

The chasseur and Madame Fontenay (the countess's maid) mounted the rumble; the postboys, with white cockades, to give notice to the world that one female more had devoted herself "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer;" crack went the whips, and away they flew, as if pursued by demons, to pass the honeymoon at the Dolphin Inn, Southampton, *viâ* Cowes; this little *détour* hav-

ing been arranged to give *éclat* to the affair.

On reaching East Cowes they found the boat of the Sea Nymph waiting for them at the landing-place; the crew dressed in their best apparel, each with a huge white favour on his breast, and all looking cheerful and pleased. The happy couple embarked with Crouch, (not "pleasure,) at the helm," for he ran them stem on to the yacht, to the great detriment of the boat's nose, and a severe shock to the feelings of the passengers.

No sooner had they reached the deck than preparations were made for sailing; the mainsail and jib were set, and, as there was a fresh breeze, the flapping and fluttering of the canvass produced a feeling of awe in the mind of Lionel not to be described, but still, the water being smooth where they were, he screwed up his courage, and determined to face the elements outside; he therefore doffed his wedding garments, and, rigged in nautical

gear, strutted about the deck, glass in hand, whilst the countess reclined abaft on soft cushions that had been brought up from the sofas in the cabin.

At length, every thing being ready, Lionel, prompted by his captain, gave the word "cast off;" the moorings were slipped, the sheets nicely trimmed, and the buoyant vessel, yielding to the propelling power of the breeze, in a few minutes shot out of the harbour, like an arrow from a bow. The yacht squadron was at anchor in the roads, and no sooner had the Sea Nymph cleared the anchorage, than wreaths of curling smoke ascended from the Commodore, who fired a salute in honour of the nuptials, and manned his yards—an example that was followed by all the square-rigged craft.

Crouch was in the seventh heaven, and the countess was in ecstasies; every thing looked propitious for the trip, for, though the breeze was fresh, the heavens were bright and clear; and they were as yet too near the land to

feel the bold swell of the waters. He could see however that the squadron were pitching heavily, and throwing the spray over their bows, and it was not long before the lively craft was dancing so nimbly over the waves that Crouch experienced great difficulty in keeping his legs, and was fain to grasp the weather-runner as a holdfast to preserve his station to windward. The face of the countess, too, was becoming unusually pale, as the motion increased.

Lionel would have given any thing to have transferred himself to the steam-boat, (a plan he more than once proposed,) but after the handsome compliment which had been paid by the commodore of the Yacht Club, he felt himself bound in honour to remain.

Away bounded the light-heeled Sea Nymph, as if sportively playing with the element she loved, and tickling the fancy of Chaplin her commander with her many gambols, as he was frequently heard to mutter, whilst a

smile mantled his bronzed features, "There's my sweet one"—"bravely done, my pretty lass," &c. &c.

"Does it not blow uncommonly hard?" asked the Tuft-hunter, addressing his captain.

"Nice breeze as ever was, sir," responded the other; "she'd almost bear another reef out—but she'll feel it more presently—to Southampton, sir?"

"Ay, ay," replied Lionel, by no means enamoured of the "nice breeze," and wishing himself ashore.

"Ready about," shouted the captain; "we must get further to windward, as the breeze will come more off the land on the other side."

"All ready," was responded from forward; the helm was gradually put down, and the Sea Nymph, obedient to control, gracefully shot up into the wind, without losing a particle of her way; but, as if to make herself

amends for being held so tightly to her duty, she threw the seas over her bows, right fore and aft, and Lionel got thoroughly drenched at the very moment the main-boom in swinging knocked his hat overboard, and his ears were pierced with the shrieks of the countess, who, like Cleopatra on the Cydnus, was floating about upon her splendid cushions. But the sails were once more trimmed; the yacht again bent to the breeze on the larboard tack, and now, taking the seas more a-head, she dashed through them unrestrained, throwing the glittering sprays aloft, and manufacturing prismatic colours out of number.

Beautiful and pleasant as all this was to the seamen, the effect was widely different to the newly-married pair, for that most distressing of all maladies, sea-sickness, was rapidly prostrating their faculties, and rendering them utterly careless of sympathy for each other. The countess called to Lionel for assistance, whilst Lionel looked upbraid-

ingly at the countess for demanding aid at so unpropitious a moment. Dash came another wave, spreading its transparent particles entirely over the vessel, and again drenching both Lionel and the countess. This was more than our hero could stand; he made a hasty and rather unusual descent into the cabin, where he was speedily followed by the bride, pale and sad, sick both in body and in mind.

Lionel had thrown himself horizontally upon one of the well-stuffed sofas in the cabin, while the countess and her faithful Fontenay occupied the other. And here we must drop a veil over the scene, leaving it to our readers' imagination to fill up all the horrors of confinement in a small cabin; the skylight down, and covered over; three individuals oppressed with dreadful nausea, and one of the most acute of the human senses suffering from the unsavoury odours proceeding from bilge-water, fresh paint, and tar.

Presently the fickle wind, as changeable as

fortune, came dead against them, and shortly afterwards, with the suddenness peculiar to a summer breeze, gradually died away till it fell perfectly calm, and the yacht lay like a log upon the water, drifting with the current, which was strongly setting towards the mother-bank. The sky too became overcast, and a meteorological contest took place aloft between the wind and the rain, in which the latter was triumphant, and came rattling down in torrents.

"Where are we, and what are we doing?" inquired Lionel of Chaplin, who had descended to the cabin.

"The wind is all gone, sir," answered the captain; "there's not enough to fill a pair of bellows: but I'm thinking we shall have it presently from the westward, as the porpuses are rolling their noses to that point."

"Is that fair for Southampton?" demanded Lionel, who longed to be on terra firma.

"Why, no, sir, not if there's any northing

in it," answered the captain; "and if it comes southerly with this here tide, we had better run for Portsmouth."

"Any where, as quick as you can," uttered the countess; "to remain here is dreadful."

Lionel offered no objections, but merely requested that every thing should be kept as quiet as possible upon deck, to which the captain reascended to whistle for the breeze. Several attempts at conversation were made between the cabin passengers, but which failed, and both at length fell off into a sort of half-dozy, dreamy slumber.

It was near midnight, when an increased noise of bustle above their heads awoke the pair; the vessel herself was, comparatively speaking, quiet, for, excepting a slight rolling motion, there was nothing to prevent a landsman from exercising his feet. The clanking of the chain cable informed Crouch that the anchor was let go, and in a few minutes

Chaplin announced that he had brought up at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, but the rain was still beating down without intermission, and he would advise them to remain on board till morning.

To this counsel they turned a deaf ear—any part of the land was preferable to the water. The boat was hauled up alongside, and in the darkness of midnight the wedded couple, covered with cloaks, and sheltered by umbrellas, entered her more dead than alive; they shoved off for the Sally Port, where there was no small surf, and, on running the gig upon the beach, she broached broadside to, which so terrified Lionel, that he sprung overboard, nearly up to his middle.

The countess was carried on shore by the crew; the splendid lace veil, which had been so ostentatiously noticed in the newspapers, sticking so close to the newly-painted tarpaulin hat of one of them, as to part from the now drenched *chapeau riz de paille;* and

the magnificent pelisse, saturated with salt-water, made such an alteration in the appearance of the wearer that few would have recognized in her the happy bride of the morning.

The carriage had been sent from Cowes to Southampton in the steam-boat, and with it the wardrobe. So, without a change of clothes, the bride and bridegroom were doomed to travel twenty-two miles in a rumbling hack chaise, and did not reach the Dolphin, Southampton, until nearly three o'clock.

But the chapter of accidents was not doomed to finish here. As the bridal pair drove through the High Street, the attention of Crouch was attracted to a brilliant illumination that graced the front of their hoped-for haven of rest, the Dolphin Inn. There was a crowd round the principal entrance, who receded as the chaise drove through the archway to the side door. Lionel let down

the jingling glass, and beheld the whole of the bar and passages decorated with laurels, bay-leaves, evergreens, and artificial flowers, from amongst which beamed numerous coloured lamps, resembling the jewelled trees recorded in the Arabian Nights. On inquiry, he found that a great county ball was being held there.

The postboy alighted, and gave a tremendous pull at the waiter's bell. Out rushed two or three of the slip-shod, white-waistcoated "coming, sir," fraternity; but seeing nothing but a chaise and pair, speedily retired, calling for "boots," to wait upon the new comers.

"The Countess of Sudbury's carriage," "Sir Arthur Melincourt's servant," "Mrs. General Harris's chair," were now respectively called; and Lionel's wrath was excited by the boots ordering the chay just to drive off, while the Mrs. General Harris and her three "bread and butter misses" got into the family vehicle.

Fortunately, any further indignities that might have awaited the newly-married pair were put an end to by the approach of the chasseur, who having learned from Madame Fontenay (who was anxiously expecting the arrival of her mistress) that a chaise had just driven up, came out to see whether it contained his new master and old mistress.

No sooner had Hartwig Boguslaw von Hattorf Offen (for such were the euphonious names of the chasseur) ascertained that the long-lost couple were found, than he commenced a volley of execrations and imprecations against the postboy, which, at the usual magisterial charge of five shillings per oath, would have made a pretty considerable hole in his year's wages.

"Drive de carriage up to de door," shouted the German, sending Sir Arthur Melincourt's servants to "der teufel;" and then, giving a peal at the waiter's bell, that scared the barmaids and ladies'-maids, assembled in the bar

(which was used upon this occasion as a cloak-room), and shouting forth for the landlady to send some of her myrmidons to show the Countess Sandomir to her apartment, Von Hattorf Offen opened the carriage-door, and the trembling bride descended, leaning on the arm of her shivering husband.

As they proceeded through the passage, escorted by the hostess and the head chambermaid, a shout of laughter and tittering issued from the abigail coterie. "Well, I'm sure!" "No, I never!" "Only think!" and other such ejaculations.

No sooner had the happy pair reached the first landing-place, and Crouch was congratulating himself on his escape from observation, when, to his dismay, he met Lords Heatherfield and Harry Standish (two of his Cowes aristocratic friends) and a party of young ladies descending the stairs. To escape was impossible; he was therefore compelled to

advance, which he did, among the notices of his noble friends.

"Why, Crouch, you are late for the ball? Where on earth have you been? We saw the 'Sea Nymph' get under way at two o'clock."

What pen could do justice to the scene of the bride and bridegroom running the gauntlet of two lordlings and five country misses; the latter dressed in all the pride and pomp of glorious Devy; the bride, as we have already said, in the most deplorable state of costume, certainly not improved by a journey of two and twenty miles in a mouldy, rickety postchaise.

At length they reached their apartment, and certainly few individuals ever underwent so many *contre-temps* on the happiest day of their lives.

Nevertheless, with the exception of a severe lumbago, which afflicted Crouch, and a rheu-

matic attack that seized upon his *sposa*, (the lovers (for they were still so) delighted themselves, during the "treacle" moon, by forming plans for the future, and a pretty paradise did they build for themselves.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Clap on more sails!—pursue!—up with your fights!
Give fire!—she is my prize, or ocean whelm them all."

SHAKSPEARE.

We now return to Vavasour, who, musing in the seclusion of his cabin, or gazing upon the wide expanse of waters that surrounded him, recalled to memory the scenes of by-gone happy days. He was a thousand leagues from the land which constituted his home, and contained all that he held most dear and sacred in life. There is a melancholy pleasure, when distance separates us from those we love, to think upon fond endearments, whilst vivid recollection—the sailors' mental artist—pictures in airy vision the object of regard.

One morning, a mist hung in the atmosphere, but clung to the surface of the waters; there was but little wind, and the officer of the watch became sensible, by certain sounds, that a vessel was at no great distance from them, though they could not then discern her. Aroused by the circumstance, a strict look-out was kept; and, as the sun rose higher and the breeze freshened, a large brig was observed upon the lee-bow, about half a league off, and sail was immediately made in chase. The stranger had almost at the same moment detected the close approximation of the Miranda, and, hauling close up, endeavoured to get to windward by luffing across her bows. But the royal cruizer was too much upon the alert to allow of the manœuvre being successfully practised; both vessels seemed to be acted upon by the same rudder; and the stranger, finding that his intention must be frustrated, up with his helm, squared his yards, and in a very short time was crowded

with canvass from the deck to the trucks, and the Miranda, following the example, was again in pursuit.

From the efforts the brig was making to avoid the Miranda, conjectures and assertions were strongly urged that she must be a slaver, and that she was well manned admitted of no doubt, from the prompt and clever way in which she had been handled. Expectation was rife — the breeze freshened — the sails, damp with the fog, caught the full power of the wind — and the two vessels walked along apparently without increasing or diminishing the space between them. The sun rose higher —the haze was dispelled; and then they were enabled to have a perfect view of the stranger. She was a long, rakish-looking craft, with very square yards, and the whiteness of her sails indicated that she was from the coast of Africa.

The commands of Vavasour were judicious, and in two hours it was evident they had

gained considerably on the chase, by the shot from the stern-guns of the latter reaching the Miranda, who, however, made no return till within good range, when the bow-chasers were successfully pointed; and the slaver, finding she could not escape by flight, determined to try the hazard of battle. Her studding-sails and flying-kites were taken in, and, rounding-to on the starboard-tack, a rattling broadside made some havoc in the materiel of the royal cruiser. The Miranda, when not more than ten fathoms distant, luffed-up on the stranger's weather-quarter, and discharged her larboard-guns with terrible effect, every ounce of iron telling with great precision, and the musketry sending forth the leaden messengers of death amongst the dark-skinned race who had been compelled to work the slaver's guns.

The action grew more desperate as the two vessels dropped alongside of each other, and was obstinately contested for forty minutes,

when an attempt was made to board the Miranda; a body of stout Negroes, urged on by their oppressors, having been selected for the purpose; but the commander of the man-of-war, aware of the intention, was prompt in his manœuvres, and, shooting a-head, he ordered the helm a-starboard, and, crossing the hawse of his opponent, poured in a destructive raking fire that swept the slaver's decks, and then, falling aboard on the bow, he continued the combat with unabated vigour, till the guns of the enemy were nearly deserted.

The boarders were summoned, and Vavasour at their head was about to lead them on the foe, when the two vessels parted, and the slaver's crew, reanimated by the circumstance, loudly cheered and once more stood to their quarters. But the advantage gained was but of little service to them, as, after three or four rounds had been exchanged, the slaughter was so great on board the slaver that the people who survived hurried below, and the

colours were hauled down. The vessel's name was the Algerine.

The gallantry of this and other actions obtained for the Miranda's commander that reward, the prospect of which is a never-failing stimulant to deeds of valour — promotion. He was appointed to post-rank in a small frigate that had completed her period of service, and was ordered home.

During the passage, they fell in with and chased a large schooner, under Spanish colours; but the general belief entertained was, that she had more frequently hoisted the black flag than the ensign of Spain; in fact, that she was a pirate. When first seen, the breeze was fresh, and the frigate, under a press of sail, gained upon the schooner, till she got nearly within reach of shot, when the wind died away and it fell calm.

The boats of the frigate were immediately hoisted out, the twelve-pounder was mounted in the launch, and the whole being manned

and well-armed, shoved off to overhaul the seeming Spaniard, who, it was discerned by the aid of the glasses, was full of men, all eagerly engaged in preparations to resist attack — the boarding-nettings were triced up, the guns were run out, and musket-barrels and sabres flashed in the bright rays of the sun.

The boats had got about midway between the two vessels, when the schooner opened her fire with much precision, so that the pinnace and one of the cutters belonging to the frigate were disabled; and the lieutenant in command, now fully aware of the superior force of their opponent, deemed it advisable to return. Before, however, he had gained the frigate, a breeze sprang up, which the schooner was the first to catch, and she lost not a moment in taking advantage of it; whilst the frigate was some time before the wind got down to her, and even when her sails slept she was delayed by hoisting in her

boats. But as soon as this was accomplished, her yards were trimmed and she was again in eager pursuit of the schooner, who had the weather-gage, and, seeing every prospect of escape, impudently fired a gun and hoisted piratical colours.

Vavasour was exceedingly mortified, especially as shortly afterwards a thick fog came on and they lost sight of the chase altogether. And now the judgment of the young commander was called into operation; he altered his course, and steered on that point which he conjectured the schooner would keep if she designed to run for Cuba; nor was he disappointed, for, the following morning, on a partial clearing away of the fog, the pirate was seen about a mile distant, dead under the frigate's lee.

Up went the helm — the schooner saw her pursuer and manœuvred to get off, but without avail; and, after an hour's chase, she came to the wind, and Vavasour ordered the boats

to be got ready to board the prize, as her colours were hauled down and there could now be no doubt of her capture. The pirate laid his foretopsail to the mast and shortened sail — the frigate reduced her canvass and out boats, which were soon pulling towards the schooner, when the latter, having forged ahead so as to get on the frigate's weather-bow, suddenly filled her topsail, set her fore and aft sails, and, hugging the breeze, endeavoured to cross the forefoot of the ship of war, and then, delivering a well-directed broadside that brought down the foretopmast of the royal craft with all its gear, the pirates cheered and stood on.

Vavasour was not slow in returning this treacherous salute; he filled and kept the frigate a little off the wind, so as to bring his broadside to bear; every gun was double-shotted; the men, enraged at the slaughter which the pirate had caused, fired with steady aim, and the beautiful schooner was in a moment nearly unrigged, her lofty spars were

hanging over the side, her sails were blowing away in ribands, and she lay, rolling on the waves, a defenceless wreck.

The boats had now no difficulty in gaining her, and, on the lieutenant hailing, they declared they had surrendered, and implored for mercy. On getting alongside and ascending to the deck, the number of the wounded and dying, scattered in all directions, strongly evidenced the fatal effects of the frigate's fire; and it appeared that, though the captain of the pirate would have still held out, and had laid a plan for blowing the schooner up, rather than be taken, yet the remnant of his people, finding escape impossible, had prevented his infernal design by seizing and confining him below. The second in command had been desperately wounded, and thereby rendered incapable of carrying the diabolical scheme into execution.

As soon as he was informed of these particulars, the lieutenant was conducted to the

cable-tier, where he found a barrel of gunpowder, with a train laid to it, and a considerable quantity of loose powder scattered round, so as to ignite another train that communicated with the magazine. The chief, his mate, and the gunner, were the only persons privy to the design, but the courage of the latter failed, and, whilst the captain only waited for the boats to get alongside to blow them all to atoms, he was grappled by several of the crew, to whom the gunner had imparted the secret, and bound hand and foot.

The name of the schooner was La Veloz, that of the Captain Zuletta, and the second in command Buckland, a native of England. Zuletta, unaware that his plot had been discovered, was now released, and he begged the attention of the British officer to the state of the wounded, more particularly to Buckland, whose mangled condition gave but small hopes of his life being saved; nor did the wretched man seem to care about the issue,

for he well knew that his existence was forfeited to the outraged laws of his country.

The surgeon's assistant of the frigate was promptly despatched to the schooner, and, under his directions, Buckland, together with the rest of the wounded, were removed to the English ship, and, being conveyed to the Orlop, where a temporary place was screened in, the surgeon was in attendance to act as circumstances required. On examining Buckland, he at once saw that his case was hopeless, and all that he could do was to administer such draughts as would serve to alleviate the sufferings of the dying man. Buckland inquired the name of the frigate, and, on being informed, requested to know that of the captain. The reply to the first question elicited no observation, but he started at the second, so as to increase his agony.

"Vavasour, Vavasour," ejaculated he. "Is he a relation of Lord Vavasour's?"

"His nephew," responded the surgeon, as

he assisted to place his patient in a reclining position.

"It is strange, indeed, very strange," muttered Buckland, and then, after a brief pause, continued aloud: — "I must see him, sir. I have a communication to make of great importance to his interest — my life is fleeting fast—not a moment should be lost. Send or go to him, sir—mention the name of Callendar —tell him of papers—but he will know what is meant—do not delay."

The surgeon complied with the request, and in a few minutes Captain Vavasour was by the outlaw's side, but found him in such agony of pain that it was impossible to converse, and, therefore leaving directions with the doctor to give immediate information, should a proper interval arrive, he returned to the deck.

Towards the evening, Buckland became more easy, and fell into a light sleep. On the following morning, the mortification commenced, and the surgeon pointed out to the

wretched man that all hopes of recovery were at an end. Buckland heard the communication unmoved. He merely asked how long he might live; the reply was possibly four and twenty hours, and that he would feel no more pain from his wound.

The dying man expressed an earnest desire to see the captain, and, during his last hours, which were prolonged beyond the medical man's anticipations, seemed anxious to atone as far as possible for his past misdeeds, by sincere repentance. It was during this period that he narrated to Vavasour the history of his life, after his escape from Ravensbrook goal.

It appeared that, on reaching Boulogne, he found a small vessel about to sail for Havre, in which he worked his passage to that place; where he shipped himself on board a West Indiaman bound to Jamaica. There were three or four female passengers on board, and Buckland obtained the situation of stew-

ardess for his faithful Barbara, who had now become his wedded wife. They reached Jamaica in safety, and remained some time at the island before the drogers brought round their cargo; they then sailed again for France.

When they were clear of the island, and were getting well north, there came on a tremendous gale, which dismasted them, and for a fortnight, being heavily laden, they were rolling about gunnel under, having lost their reckoning. At last they found that they had blown down among the reefs to the southward of the Bahama Isles. At one time, they had rigged jury-masts, but, the gale springing up again, had carried them over the side, and there were no more spars or sails on board.

On the sixteenth morning, a heavy sea was running, which bore them down upon a reef of rocks, from which there was no chance of escape. The captain, who was very cool and

collected, ordered the boats out, distribut water and provisions, and *told off* the crew to their respective stations. The female passengers, Buckland, his wife, and child, were to be in the same boat, and, when the women were put carefully in the stern sheets, Buckland was called out by the captain to go for a compass that had been forgotten; but, while he was away, the ship was struck by a heavy sea, and, to prevent the boat from swamping, she was pushed off. The launch still held on for the captain, who hastened in with the mate, Buckland, and part of the crew.

"Now, my men," exclaimed the captain, "give way, for your lives, give way."

The boats had not been clear of the ship five minutes, when the one in which Barbara Buckland was, and which pulled heavily on account of its being deeply laden, could not make head against the wind and sea, which bore her down on the reef: a cry was heard—a cry of terror and despair on the part of the

women—and in less than a quarter of an hour the wretched husband had the misery of seeing his wife and child swallowed up together with all hands in the breakers.

The other crews pulled for their lives. Towards night the wind lulled, and there was every appearance of fine weather. Their object was to try and fetch the Bahama Isles, or some of the small quays to the southward of them. At the end of three days, during which period their sufferings and deprivations were intense, they fell in with and were picked up by a vessel bound to England.

On landing at Portsmouth, Buckland, more reckless than ever at the loss of Barbara, pursued the lawless trade of smuggling, and, being successful in landing a cargo, realized a considerable sum of money. Falling in with a Spaniard at Bordeaux, named Zuletta, who was fitting out a privateer, to cruise on the Spanish main, Buckland proposed to join him

as second officer; his offer was accepted, and the schooner sailed. She mounted twelve brass guns, was remarkably well fitted, and had as fine a crew as ever sailed. On reaching the Spanish coast, they hoisted the black flag, and for some time they were very successful, making several valuable prizes.

They had been out about three months, and were returning to port to refit, when they fell in with the frigate, and the occurrences took place that have already been narrated.

No sooner had the wretched sufferer concluded his narrative, than he fell off into a slight slumber, and Vavasour, who had listened with the deepest interest to every word that had fallen from his lips, now feared that he should be unable to get the wandering senses of the dying man back to the subject of his partner in crime, Mark Hindley. After a lapse, however, of some minutes, Buckland, who was in one of those dozing fits of stupefaction that precede the close of exist-

ence, suddenly started, and resumed his confessions: —

"Mark Hindley, my comrade Mark, fell a victim at Boulogne, to that dreadful malady that ravaged England and France. On his death-bed he entrusted me with an ebony case, and I was base enough to dispose of it. Poor, poor, Mark! Of all my crimes, that which lies the heaviest on my soul is the robbing of my departed friend. But what could I do, in a foreign land, without money, without friends, my wife reduced to abject poverty, my child almost starving? And justly was I punished: my illgotten money procured us a passage to the West Indies, and on our return I saw my poor devoted Barbara and her child perish before my eyes."

Here the dying sufferer gave way to a paroxysm of grief.

"And to whom did you dispose of the case?" anxiously asked Vavasour, when Buckland in some degree had recovered himself.

"To a wandering Jew, Ramos."

Here the wretched man's faculties became bewildered, and he continued at intervals in a rambling manner :—

"You were very kind to poor Mark — he spoke of you with his latest breath—Lord Vavasour drove him to crime — he threw him into prison for a trespass — he was not a poacher then—there he fell in with desperate men—but the papers will deprive his lordship of his illgotten property !"

Vavasour listened with the deepest attention, and tried to get the man's wandering ideas back to the ebony case and its contents.

"Mark with his dying breath told me to deliver the papers to you or Miss Agnes—the marriage certificate of her poor mother — he was a witness." (Here Buckland's words became almost unintelligible).

"And all the papers were in the case ?" eagerly ejaculated Vavasour.

"But Ramos knows, he bought it. Bless you, bless you !" faltered the expiring man, as

Vavasour smoothed his pillow, "Mark—Mark—forgive ——."

A mist came over the gipsy pirate's eyes, and in a few seconds he was no more.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"What! fair, and young, and faithful, too?
A miracle, if this be true."

WALLER.

It must be remembered that, during our narrative, Time, which operates alike upon peer and peasant, high and low, rich and poor — which dispenses beauty to the ruin, and, *en revanche*, makes a ruin of beauty — Time had rolled his ceaseless course, and season had succeeded season. Years rush by us like the wind. We see not whence the current comes, nor whitherward it is tending, and we seem ourselves to witness their flight without a sense that we are changed; and yet the fleet-

ing hours have beguiled man of his strength, as the winds rob the wood of their foliage.

Nothing is so deceitful as the progress of time. Change of scene or incident gives wings to the passing moment, but throws additional delays on the past; and, when we look back to the period that has fled by us thus rapidly, we scarcely credit its apparently shortened duration. But the reverse is the case with a monotonous life: there, hour after hour, rolls slowly on till we start on retrospection at the days that have thus glided by unnoticed, and lapsed into eternity in silence and regret.

So it was with the hours at Harefield, to which place Agnes Callendar had returned to cheer her uncle in his declining years. There we shall again see her who has been too long absent from our view. We shall see her beautiful and graceful as before; but the cheek will be paler, and a smile will less often play upon the lip; and there will be more serious-

ness on the brow, and less animation in the eye.

The bright mornings, the rich sunsets, the varied foliage of October, had yielded to the dull fogs, the leafless branches, the drizzling rain, and the outward and inward gloom of the succeeding month. About this time, an event occurred which greatly affected Sir Walter Callendar's fortune. Much of his income consisted in West India property, and, like many other proprietors, he depended upon an agent to manage his estates. This agent failed to an immense amount. But it would have been fortunate if this had been all. The cause of the failure was that the island where all his property was situated was desolated by one of those hurricanes which have so often ruined the greatest West India estates.

It is said that "misfortunes never come singly." Certain it is, that a further decision in the Court of Chancery against Miss Callen-

dar's claims to her paternal property greatly added to the melancholy feelings that prevailed at Harefield.

The decision of this cause operated, as usual, very differently upon the different parties who were more or less interested or concerned in it. The small community of Ravensbrook and the surrounding neighbourhood were divided in their opinions respecting the transaction, according as the Callendars were unpopular or popular among them; and, as they associated latterly but little with their neighbours, the former may be supposed to be the predominant character of the sentiment entertained respecting them. Of this fact, we may rest assured that every man who, whatever may be his real motive, abstains from general intercourse with his neighbours, is at once entered upon their black books as a proud and impertinent sort of a personage. There are many set terms and phrases which, under such circumstances as our history presents,

like ordnance ammunition in store, are ready at hand to be thrown at such a person under any reverse of fortune—"Pride must have its fall"—"No good ever comes from mystery"—and so forth—whilst others "always apprehended that there was something wrong"—"I always thought so"—or "I always said so."

These are some of the *Io triumphes* of those shrewd and benevolent persons who are in the habit of bestowing more attention upon their neighbours' affairs than their own.

Such was the state of public feeling in the neighbourhood of Harefield, where Sir Walter, under his double affliction, passed many anxious and weary days. One fine, clear morning in this usually dismal month, while the worthy baronet was mournfully contemplating the position of his affairs, the beauty of the scene, the tranquillity which seemed to pervade all nature, diffused a momentary balm over his mind, as he strolled around his beautifully diversified pleasure-grounds, and beheld

the wild and picturesque magnificence of the surrounding scenery.

Turning with reluctance from this rich landscape, his eyes rested upon his mansion, and thoughts the most painful crowded upon his mind, as he stood contemplating his once happy home. The persecutions, losses, and disappointments he had sustained arose in terrible array before him, whilst his misery was aggravated by the reflection that every sanguine hope he had once indulged in of his niece's aggrandizement was completely destroyed.

To yield himself to vain repinings for past afflictions he felt would only render those of the present more acute, and enervate his mind at a time when firmness was doubly requisite to enable him to adopt a plan that might rescue his niece not only from present but from future difficulties. After deliberating a while, he found that the exhausted state of his finances was by no means adequate to his

present expenditure; necessity, therefore, determined him to quit the halls of his father—that enchanting spot, where the highest cultivation intermingled with the wild simplicity of unadorned nature.

"It is inevitable! Harefield must be parted with!" Sir Walter at last ejaculated. "It must fall into the possession of others!"

And where was he to go? Where should he seek a home? The wide world was open to him. As for himself, he could bear every deprivation; but his now penniless niece must be his companion in some humble abode, in some remote obscurity, there, in the blooming season of youth, to be immured in the depth of solitude!

Such were the meditations passing through the mind of the old English gentleman, when his sight was gratified by the appearance of his niece. She had just returned from her afternoon walk. He met her with cheerfulness, and, giving her his arm, continued his

ramble. Sir Walter then proceeded to tell, or rather to confirm to her, what she had before learnt, that his reduced income was insufficient for the many accumulated expenses of Harefield, and that it was only adequate to a retirement from the world, which, with a sigh he declared, except for her sake, he quitted without regret.

Agnes, with the most frank sincerity, hastened to relieve him from all anxiety on her account, by declaring her perfect willingness to retire into the shade of some tranquil solitude, where she felt assured he would regain his health and happiness; and they returned to the house together, each relieved by this accidental conference.

Things had continued in this state for several weeks, and the winter was drawing to a close, when Agnes was astonished by receiving, one morning, before she had quitted her dressing-room, a message from her uncle, who desired to see her without delay. She obeyed

the summons, and, descending, found Sir Walter pacing, or rather hobbling, backwards and forwards through the breakfast-room, in a state of evident agitation.

As soon as she entered he made an effort to appear cheerful, and, placing a chair, requested her to be seated; he then drew his own close to hers, and, taking her hand, addressed her as follows:

"Agnes, I have seen with extreme satisfaction the attentions which my valued friend, Sir Frederick Courtney, has for a length of time paid you, and I am happy to say, that he has commissioned me to make you an offer of his hand and fortune. All that he desires in return, is a direct answer, either in the affirmative or negative; because, as he justly observes, though his love for you is not less ardent than the love of younger men, still it is not consistent with his ideas of decorum and propriety to continue longer in a state of incertitude. Now, my love, though you must

be quite aware that I desire nothing so much as your happiness—and though I do assure you, let your decision be what it may, you shall never be subjected to remonstrance or reproach from me—there are circumstances which I think it my duty to lay fairly before you, and which will, perhaps, induce you not to reject so favourable an opportunity of settling yourself in life. I am all but a ruined man. My West India property has entirely failed; and though for a little while longer we may be able to remain here, there is not a shadow of a hope that Harefield will not, in a very short time, pass into other hands."

Agnes, at this intelligence, started from her seat; she looked perfectly aghast; and Sir Walter, interpreting her look, instantly added,

"Nay, my child, do not imagine that I could act so dishonourably as to keep this matter a secret from Sir Frederick. He knows all—it was, indeed, at the close of that very

conversation in which I made him acquainted with the real state of my affairs, that he generously laid himself and his princely revenues at your feet. So go, Agnes; I do not press you to determine in a moment; consult your heart; and, as soon as you have come to a determination, let me know its result."

There is a love which is as silent as it is deep; beautiful, as productive of ecstasy as of sorrow; which is striven against — prayed against—yet, winding itself around the heart-strings, that would break with agony, ere it could be torn away! Such was the love of Agnes for Vavasour. We need not, therefore, inform our readers that the proposition of Sir Frederick Courtney was firmly though gratefully declined.

Nearly two years had elapsed since that eventful day on which Vavasour had taken leave of Agnes—when, one morning, as she was making some purchases at the "Swan and Edgar's" of Ravensbrook, Mrs. O'Grady

Galloway, seeing the carriage at the door, entered the shop, and, after informing her of all the gossip of the day, added the announcement of Lord Vavasour's death; at the same time, producing a newspaper, she called Miss Callendar's attention to a despatch to the Admiralty, giving an account of several slave captures which H. M. brig Miranda, Captain, now Lord Vavasour, had made upon the coast of Africa. In the short period of eighteen months, no less than fifteen vessels, employed in that disgraceful traffic, had struck their colours to the Miranda. The newspaper went on to add, that the gallant captain had been appointed to post-rank in a frigate, the Helena, which had completed her period of service, and was ordered home.

Agnes, with suppressed tears of joy in her eyes, thanked the gossiping Mrs. O'Grady Galloway for her welcome intelligence, and hastened home to communicate to her guardian the joyful tidings she had heard of one her heart still held so dear.

A few days had elapsed after this meeting, when a letter was placed in Miss Callendar's hands.

On reaching her room, she opened it with some trepidation, glanced at the signature, and read the well-known name of Frank Vavasour. The memory of past happiness, of early youth, of the bright dawn of the brightest, the most heavenly of hopes, of blighted affection, of kindness unvarying, of all-enduring affection, of every manly feeling, every manly virtue, every estimable attainment, crowded on her mind. The tears that dimmed her eyes were gentle, happy tears, and they flowed afresh as she read the welcome letter.

It was dated Plymouth; and after informing her of his uncle, Lord Vavasour's death, told her every circumstance connected with Buckland's decease, and of the hopes raised by that event. It told her even more welcome news, that his affection for her was unchanged

—his hopes of still winning her hand unabated.

In Agnes's breast, the dazzling ray of hope again danced as on a brilliant mirror; and although in her character there was as little of the alloy of vanity as ever fell to woman's share, yet how instinctively did she recur to the ready conviction of Frank Vavasour's long-felt attachment.

Oh, what devotion, what constant, unselfish devotion was revealed to her in this last proof of his love! But, as she thought upon his generous offer, the recollection that he was now rich, and that she was destitute, threw its bitter alloy into the cup of bliss. "What! refuse his proffered affection, when I was the reputed heiress of immense wealth, and now accept him when Fortune has showered her gifts on him! No, it cannot be! Should I recover what I once deemed mine, I could, I would prove that I am not ungrateful! But now—oh, even he might

doubt; the world would certainly not even doubt, but decide at once—that I was influenced by interest."

But to return to our hero, Vavasour. The Helena was ordered home; and as the frigate dashed gallantly through the water, at one time careening to an adverse wind, at another rolling before a favourite gale, bounding over the foaming seas in the direction of his native country, Vavasour felt his hopes revive.

Letters and newspapers from England had already informed him of the important events of Agnes's altered situation, and Sir Walter's ruined prospects. They are known to the reader, and therefore we will spare him Vavasour's comments upon them, and glide at once to their influence on his feelings, as shewn by his letter. After describing his uncle's death, he adds:

"Fortune has been lavish to me of late; my uncle's large possessions are mine; but

wealth has no charm for me, unless it enable me to shower its blessings on you. I shall hasten to Harefield shortly. Will you welcome me? Will your heart rejoice at the approach of one whose only object is to devote his life to your happiness?

"VAVASOUR."

"Generous, noble creature!" said Agnes, as she pressed the letter to her lips, and sank on her knees in silent prayer and thanksgiving.

After pondering, half painfully, half in heartfelt delight, on the new circumstances in which she found herself, Agnes decided that she would make her reply to Vavasour's proposal conditional — that if fortune ever smiled on her, she would be his; if not, destitute as she was, she never would unite her fate with that of any other, but would cherish to her latest hour the memory of his generous affection.

At the period of the arrival of Vavasour's letter, the baronet was just recovering from a fit of the gout. He was seated in his great arm-chair, and Agnes reading by his side, when the letter was brought in. The raptures of both were equally eloquent; but they were expressed with boisterous joy by the one; with the mild transport of perfect happiness by the other.

It need scarcely be said that the warm-hearted baronet immediately wrote to Vavasour, offering him that earnest welcome to Harefield which his almost parental regard for him dictated.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Proud lineage! now how little thou appearest!"

BLAIR.

Certainly, honest Shenstone was right: every one has found "his warmest welcome in an inn:" the candles are lighted with such alacrity; the table is laid with such despatch; the bill of fare is so admirably divided into fish, flesh, and fowl; the first dish is so well and pompously put on by "mine host;" his myrmidons of waiters are so active and attentive: who would not encounter all the troubles travellers are heirs to, to find such a solace for his cares at his journey's end?

Such were Vavasour's thoughts as he entered that splendid establishment, the Royal Hotel at Plymouth.

No sooner had the frigate been paid off, than her late noble commander lost no time in proceeding to London, where his first care was to see his solicitor, Mr. Allworth, and place in his hands the depositions of the deceased Buckland; and the lawyer despatched a trusty clerk to every seaport, that the merchant-ship in which Mark Hindley had come over in was likely to have touched at, in the hope of following up the clue already given.

Vavasour then proceeded to Portman Square, where he was ushered into the late lord's library. There he found Mr. Spiers, surrounded by papers, parchments, and every species of legal documents, deep in the mystery of accounts and financial arrangements, and altogether as busy as a man could reasonably be expected to make himself in any body's affairs but his own. He received Vavasour with the most abject politeness, and, with a decorously lugubrious aspect, stam-

mered out his apologies for his abruptness upon a former occasion, and offered his condolences on his recent loss, and his congratulations on the accession of the title and property.

As for reasons with which the reader is acquainted, Lord Vavasour did not wish to encourage the advances of the wily attorney, he confined his inquiries to such topics as the last moments of the late lord; the time appointed for the funeral, &c.; on all which points Vavasour obtained categorical answers, the particulars of which we will spare our readers, merely stating that the funeral was fixed for the next week; and that Frank Vavasour, as next of kin, and chief mourner, was to escort the remains into the country for interment in the family vault.

On the following Monday the funeral of the late Lord Vavasour took place. Important as his large estates and immense wealth had made him, in the neighbourhood of Vava-

sour Manor he was little known and little regretted; and the crowds assembled in the churchyard, in spite of the rain that fell incessantly, were drawn there by the magnificence of the pageant, rather than by respect or regret for the deceased. The obsequies of the dead were, like the living character of the man, cold, formal, and artificial. It was over; the splendidly embossed oaken coffin had been committed to the damp, earthy vault. Gold and silver, satin and velvet, rosewood and oak, broidery and blazonry, had done their best to make death to this mighty man differ a little from what the beggar found it: but, in one particular, at least, he shared the fate of those who shared not his greatness—he was buried, and speedily forgotten. The "pomp, pride, and circumstance" of earthly vanities; the sickening paraphernalia, the funeral silk, the crape scarfs, the gloves, the tapers, the mutes, the "baked meats," the "inky cloak," the "cus-

tomary suits of solemn black," the haunting smell of camphor, rue, and rosemary—all had vanished; and the funeral day was at an end, with all its gloomy mockeries.

On the morrow the family had all departed from the mansion, except the new lord and his immediate personal attendants. Mr. Spiers, however, still remained, and was screwing up his face to the proper dolorous expression for a farewell, and a hope that he should still be honoured with his lordship's business, when Vavasour passed the crouching lawyer, without even deigning to look at him, and, entering his carriage, ordered the postboys to make the best of their way on their return to the metropolis.

A pressing invitation awaited him from Sir Walter, and he lost no time in making arrangements for his departure for Harefield.

On arriving there, Vavasour's heart beat high as he drove through the well-known gates of the park. He seemed to recognize

every tree which formed the avenue leading up to the house. What scenes, what vicissitudes, what struggles, had engaged him, since he last passed through those gates, as he thought never to return! The sickening feeling of that desolate morning, when he was refused by Agnes, was still so strong in his remembrance, that he actually felt the same sensations now, though recalled in so flattering a manner. Did he owe his recal to Agnes herself, or only to the favour of her guardian? This was a question he did not dare to answer: but, at any rate, he did not return the poor dependant, subject to the control of a hard-hearted uncle—so far so good: but how did this affect the main point? Was the heart of Agnes free? or, if so, what reason had he to hope for success? What sign was there of encouragement? What favour had she ever shewn him, beyond gratitude for kindness when in tribulation? On the contrary, Agnes's most determined resolution to let

him depart for ever, the moment he disclosed his feelings, without a sign that they were partaken—these were reflections as uncheering as they were obvious; and yet, strange to say, had never presented themselves to him in such force as at this moment.

While ruminating over his prospects, he beheld Sir Walter and Miss Callendar coming down the avenue to meet him. He was soon out of his carriage; and the hearty and joyous welcome they gave him dissipated the cloudy thoughts with which he had entered these once happy precincts.

The reception Vavasour had met with, the agitation his presence had created in the mind of Agnes, seemed to promise brighter prospects. The beauty of the weather, and the excitement caused by the presence of his beloved one, were sufficient to thaw all reserve, and he gave way, without restraint, to the gaiety by which, for the first time during many months, he was inspired. The ride,

with all its accessories, was delightful; and visions of happiness again arose before the now enraptured Vavasour. The dark clouds which appeared to hang for ever over his fate seemed gradually to be dispersed, and to bring to his view sources of enjoyment, which, a few months before, he would not have dared to contemplate.

Still his heart would often sink within him, when he remembered those words so fatal to his happiness—" I never can be yours." He felt that until Agnes Callendar's claims to her heritage were proved, her pride would revolt from entering into any family, especially one from whom she had received so many unmerited slights.

The night previous to the expected arrival of a letter from Vavasour's active agent, on the subject of Miss Callendar's claims, Vavasour, sleepless and unhappy, counted every hour that was told by the clock on the large echoing staircase. He listened with restless

impatience for the sound of any footstep that could give notice of approaching day, and looked as eagerly through his curtains for the first beam of morning, as if returning light was to bring with it renovated happiness.

If Vavasour's thoughts had "murdered sleep," Agnes's slumbers had not been more refreshing. Rising early, she obeyed the summons of Sir Walter to accompany him on a visit of condolence to a neighbouring family, who had just lost their only child.

No letter arrived for Vavasour, and he passed his day under the most melancholy feelings. In vain he tried to settle his mind to some employment. Reading, sketching, billiards, were all tried, and all equally failed.

Towards the afternoon, Agnes returned, and, occupied with dull thoughts, proceeded to take a solitary ramble. Turning her steps through the wild woodlands that lay at the back of the mansion, she trod very nearly the

same path which she had pursued with Frank Vavasour, on the first morning of his visit to Harefield. She traced the walk by the side of the river; a thousand thousand flowers were on its banks, and the brightest sunbeams on its waters. But the feelings of her heart were changed; and the light which nature had then borrowed from joy was now all overshadowed by the clouds of care. As she gazed upon the stream, and the wild banks, and the woods round her, and felt that the morning might bring tidings that she was an outcast, a beggar, without home, the pain was too much, and she wept.

Still she trod her way onward, pondering gloomily over her fate, when the train of her thoughts was suddenly broken. Passing through a green lane, on the hedges of which grew the hawthorn and wild rose, she heard footsteps behind her, and, turning round, she saw beside her Frank Vavasour.

"Pardon this intrusion, Miss Callendar,"

exclaimed he; "believe me, it was not premeditated. I beheld you accidentally at a distance, and could not resist the temptation of joining you."

Agnes hung her head, but did not speak; and Vavasour continued to walk by her side.

"There is a subject," continued he, "dearest to my heart, upon which you must give me a moment's attention."

She slowly turned her head, and, for the first time, gazed at the speaker; her countenance betrayed kindness, while she faintly murmured—"Do not, I entreat you, urge a subject that I dare not at present trust myself to think upon."

Vavasour's eye brightened.—"There is kindness in your words, Agnes—pardon me, Miss Callendar—for Heaven's sake, tell me—have my hopes been all in vain?—dare I think that you entertain the least regard for me?"

The listener, unwilling that he should proceed further, interrupted him.

"Nay; how can you doubt my regard—my gratitude!"

The high spirit of Vavasour kindled at these words; gratitude was the last feeling, except pity, that he wished her to entertain.

"Why for ever allude to gratitude?" said Vavasour, with a smile; but there are smiles more melancholy than a world of sighs, and his was full of pain, anxiety, and disappointment.

"Vavasour, we will talk no more on this subject—brighter days may come—to-morrow my fate will be decided—you have my deepest gratitude—my—"

The deepening blush concluded the sentence as Vavasour's heart could have desired.

"Now, Heaven bless you!" he cried, with a joyful smile; "your words, your looks make amends for all the misery I have lately experienced."

They walked on, and conversed more familiarly. They had arrived at the extremity of

the lane, and before them extended Harefield lawn. The mansion, at a distance, was partly concealed in shadow, for the sun was setting behind the lofty trees; but the river gleamed in gold, and the hills that bounded the prospect were tinged with crimson. All around breathed peace, harmony, and beauty, and the scene was well calculated to heighten the romance of young affection.

"Ere you leave me," exclaimed Vavasour, imploringly, "say one word — Oh! do not drive me to despair. Give me one gleam of hope."

Agnes averted her head. At length she spoke. Her words were nearly inaudible, yet they breathed of hope and affection.

Vavasour heard no more — her words implied enough to assure him he was beloved. Silently they proceeded homewards — each afraid to trust themselves upon a subject so dearly connected with their future happiness.

With fresh energy, Vavasour now entered

into the question of Agnes's affairs, and laid before Sir Walter and his niece the depositions taken from the dying Buckland.

Nothing could exceed the respectful tenderness of Vavasour's behaviour towards Agnes. He led her gently, and in a manner which hovered very skilfully between the solemnity of a formal examination and the familiar questioning of curiosity, to relate the whole history of her life in Canada, from the demise of her mother to the dreadful death of her father.

Nothing could be more simple and more clear than her statement. The certificate of her parents' marriage had been deposited in an old silver casket; and upon this point she dwelt with the greatest minuteness. The remembrance of the first angry word that had escaped her father's lips, caused by her having in a childish fit incautiously opened the casket, could never be obliterated from her mind.

Vavasour listened to her ingenuous narra-

tive, and felt that, whatever the lawyers might think of it, he was himself fully persuaded that the marriage had taken place.

In this persuasion he left Harefield, having taken copious minutes of Agnes's narrative. He set off for London with the purpose of laying all the circumstances before counsel, and sparing neither cost nor pains in an investigation on the results of which the best hopes of his life depended.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts."
SHAKSPEARE.

Lord Vavasour had for some time been most zealously redeeming the pledge he had given Miss Callendar, to exert his utmost energy in her cause. He had taken the first legal opinions upon the question; and had despatched one of the cleverest satellites of the metropolitan police to Spain, offering a reward of five hundred pounds to whoever would produce a copy of the marriage certificate of the late Sir Charles Callendar, properly attested.

The morning after Vavasour's arrival in

London, he was rather disagreeably surprised by a visit from Lionel Crouch, who now came to pay his homage to the new lord and lion of the day. After expatiating upon his marriage, and the merits of his countess, the Tuft-hunter proceeded.

"Ah! Vavasour, I am delighted to see you back. All London are teeming with your praise; it would have gladdened your heart to have seen *la belle* Agnes when she first heard of your success. Poor Montressor has been terribly thrown over by her. We fancied at Cowes it was all right; but she actually refused him (here the colour came and went in Vavasour's cheeks). Talking of Montressor, you must come and see his yacht, the Enchantress; she's a perfect craft."

Here Crouch, who had picked up a few nautical phrases, entered into an animated description of mainsails, topsails, jibs, spankers, binnacles, bowsprits, crosstrees, and ratlines, all of which, however interesting he might

have imagined them, we will not inflict upon our readers. He continued:

"On the fifth of next month there is to be a launch at Woolwich. All the world will be there. Montressor gives a *fête* after it, and commissioned me to give you a special invitation. His is a splendid yacht. Fancy that rascal Ramos charging him six hundred guineas for the fitting up of his cabin!"

"Ramos!" repeated Vavasour.

"Yes, Ramos—Elias Ramos and Brothers, Curiosity Dealers, Ordnance Row, Portsea. Why *you* don't know them, Vavasour; *you* have no dealings with Jews."

"I have heard of them," stammered Vavasour.

"But come and judge of the Enchantress yourself; she is off Greenwich; the skipper gives a dinner on board after the launch next Monday week, and I can answer for his being delighted to see you."

"Thank you," said Vavasour; but whether

it meant "thank you, yes!" or "thank you, no!" the utterer of it had not fully made up his mind.

Crouch now took his leave, telling his companion that he was sure Montressor would take no refusal, and that a card should be sent.

Vavasour now turned over in his mind all the information he had received from the dying Buckland. Ramos was certainly the name of the Israelite who had purchased Mark Hindley's illgotten property. Ringing for his servant, Vavasour ordered his travelling carriage to be brought round as soon as possible, and in less than seven hours found himself at the door of the far-famed George, at Portsmouth. What activity prevailed! the bells ringing, landlord bowing, waiters running, chambermaids bawling, ostlers hallooing. Vavasour alighted, was shown to a private room, had a huge bill of fare thrust into his hands, ordered

a late dinner, and instantly proceeded upon his voyage of discovery.

He had no difficulty in finding the residence of Elias Ramos and Brothers, and entering the shop requested to see Mr. Elias himself.

"Mr. Eliash is very busy at this moment," said a dirty Jewish-looking stripling of about twelve years of age, clad in the faded relics of dandyism; "but Mr. Solomon will wait upon you;" then screaming from the bottom of the stairs, "a gentleman to see Mr. Solomon."

In a few seconds the summons was obeyed. Vavasour explained that his business was with Mr. Elias, and that if it was inconvenient for him to see him at the present moment, he would call later. But "cunning little Solomon" would not throw away a chance, so, requesting "the gentleman" to walk into the back parlour, he took the place of his worthy brother, who was advancing loans, to sundry miserable-looking individuals, upon shawls,

bonnets, blankets, bedding, cloaks, shoes, boots, &c.

The room in which Vavasour found himself was a small, close, oppressive apartment, so full of furniture that he could hardly make his way through it. It was actually strewed with different articles: guitars, violins, flutes, china, glass, bagatelle-boards, cabinets, chairs, silks, swords, pistols, dirks, sabretaches, epaulettes, military and naval uniforms, shells, Indian weapons, Chinese gongs, clocks, thermometers, barometers, quadrants, chronometers, charts, telescopes, &c.

Mr. Elias presently appeared, and eyeing Vavasour, who, in his travelling costume and pea-jacket, did not look like a very rich customer, settled in his own mind that he was either anxious to obtain a loan or part with some of his property.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, sir, but I was very busy, trying to raise some monish to

meet a customer's wish, but monish is a very scarce article at this present moment."

"It was not upon the subject of a loan," said Vavasour, "that I sought you."

"Worse and worse: if you want to dispose of any articles," interrupted the Jew, "the market is glutted."

Vavasour resumed: "I have nothing to dispose of; my object is to ascertain what became of some property that was purchased by you in 182—, about the month of July, from an individual of the name of Mark Hindley."

Ramos changed colour, and gave his inquirer a most scrutinizing look; then, recovering himself, he said:

"I don't recollect the name, but I may perhaps find it in the books; here, Rachel, bring the daybook, 182—."

"Come, Mr. Ramos," resumed Vavasour, "let us understand one another. My wish is to become the purchaser of any property

pledged or sold to you by one Mark Hindley, who came from America in the month of June or July, 182—. There is also an ebony case containing some documents, of no value to any one but the family they concern, and which was sold to one Ramos, in France, about a year ago. Return these articles to the owners, and five hundred guineas shall be your reward."

"Five hundred guineas!" echoed the astonished Israelite; "Rachel, we have no occasion for the books."

This was addressed to a dark-eyed maid of Judah, who had entered with a huge mass of mouldy, dusty-looking ledgers.

"But, sir," he continued, turning to Vavasour, "any information that I possess is at your service. We have a private book, in which some of our purchases are entered, but caution, sir, is the very soul of business."

"Right! Mr. Ramos, right!" replied Vavasour. "I am perfectly aware that the pro-

perty and documents came honestly into your possession, and I will guarantee you the payment when they are transferred to mine."

"Nothing can be handsomer than your conduct, sir. I will make every inquiry upon the subject—to whom shall I address the result?"

"To Lord Vavasour, Portman Square, London," replied the nobleman.

"Beg your lordship a thousand pardons," said the worthy pawnbroker, amazingly relieved at ascertaining that his customer was not a police officer in disguise. "I shall be proud to serve your lordship. I rather think I had that pleasure when your lordship was a midshipman on board the Illustrious. Solomon, Solomon, you're wanted," cried Mr. Elias. "Benjamin, attend to the customers; Rachel, step down into the shop."

In less than five minutes the triumvirate were in close consultation.

"Do you remember," inquired Elias, "any purchases made from one Mark Hindley?"

"I'll take my oath, I know nothing about it," responded Solomon, who, notwithstanding his possession of a name so revered for wisdom, was greatly puzzled at the question.

"Well, Solomon," continued the other, "I rather think we did purchase some few articles of plate of a person that answers the description."

And here followed a slight conversation in the Hebrew tongue, which we will (for reasons that may be guessed at) spare our readers, but which evidently produced a most powerful effect upon Solomon's memory.

"Now I do remember," said he, "some articles purchased in 182—. The plate-chest stood for some months just where you are sitting; we sold it last August to one of the members of the Yacht Club. We lost considerably by it."

"An ebony case is what I seek," said Vavasour, "marked with the initials, C. C."

"I don't remember an ebony case," muttered Elias. "Speak, Solomon, do you know any thing of it?"

"I will take my oath I do not," rejoined the latter; and here the Jew spoke conscientiously, for he had never seen the article in question, and which had been purchased and resold by his brother before his return to England.

Elias Ramos now turned over in his mind every circumstance connected with his transactions with Mark Hindley and Buckland, and remembered that, independently of the purchases he had made from the former, he had been intrusted by him with an old valise, containing, as was stated, some papers. Turning to Vavasour, he said:

"If your lordship will come into the storeroom, I will show you all it contains. I rather think a man, calling himself Mark, did leave a valise here some years ago."

Vavasour was all impatience; and follow-

ing the Israelite up a narrow staircase, was ushered into an immense store-room. After rummaging about for some time, Ramos pulled from under a chest of drawers a small military valise, on opening which the initials, C. C. ——th Regt. were visible.

Vavasour lost no time in looking over its contents, but they consisted principally of orderly books, morning returns, routes, &c. Nothing in the shape of a private paper or memorandum was to be found.

Vavasour, disappointed at the failure, now remembered that the pawnbroker had talked of a plate-chest.

"Do you remember," he inquired, "to whom you sold the plate-chest?"

"To a gentleman of the Yacht Club, but I forget the name."

"Was it Lord Montressor?"

"No, no, my lord, I know his lordship; I fitted out his cabin for him; nothing but oak carvings; his lordship was very hard upon me; I lost money by the job."

"Rascal!" thought Vavasour, recalling Crouch's statement to his mind. Finding that nothing could be elicited from the Jew, Vavasour took his leave, again reminding him of the reward that would be his, should he be able to give any clue to the intelligence he sought.

The following day, Vavasour returned to London, where he again devoted his energies to the cause he had embarked in heart and soul. Frequent disappointment as to the object of his inquiries had made him distrustful of even the most promising appearances, and the chances were still so much against a complete and satisfactory discovery, that he could not feel sanguine as to the result, although, undoubtedly, the circumstantial evidence was very strong as to the certificate having been in existence.

Still Vavasour did not despond; he laid "the flattering unction to his soul," that, through his numerous agents, if not a thorough discovery, still *something* would most pro-

bably be learned; another link in that fatal and mysterious chain would be supplied, and if expectation were not wholly satisfied, hope at least might be revived, even by a partial and scanty disclosure.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"England hails thee with emotion,
  Mightiest child of naval art,
Heaven resounds thy welcome! Ocean
  Takes thee smiling to his heart.
Giant oaks of bold expansion,
  O'er seven hundred acrés fell,
All to build thy noble mansion,
  Where our hearts of oak shall dwell.
'Midst those trees the wild deer bounded,
  Ages long ere we were born,
And our great-grandfathers sounded
  Many a jovial hunting-horn.
Oaks that living did inherit
  Grandeur from our earth and sky,
Still robust, the native spirit
  In your timbers shall not die.
Ship to shine in martial story,
  Thou shalt cleave the ocean's path,
Freighted with Britannia's glory,
  And the thunders of her wrath.
Foes shall crowd their sails and fly thee,
  Threat'ning havoc to their deck,
When afar they first descry thee,
  Like the coming whirlwind's speck.
Gallant bark! thy pomp and beauty
  Storm or battle ne'er shall blast,
Whilst our tars in pride and duty
  Nail thy colours to the mast."

T. Campbell.

The fifth of May had arrived; and in the annals of "our wooden walls," from the days

of the famed ship Harry *grace de Dieu*, downwards, it would be difficult to point out an event of the kind which excited so great and general an interest as did the launch of H. M. ship Conqueror. At an early hour all London was in a commotion from east to west, all eagerly hurrying towards Woolwich Dockyard. The road presented a perfect stream of vehicles, of every denomination, from the royal *cortège* to the Whitechapel cart. Equestrians and pedestrians were bending their way to the scene of action.

By water all was bustle, as well as by land. The "silent highway" was as much crowded by steamers and craft, of every size and shape, as the noisy and dusty highway on *terra-firma* was by coaches, omnibuses, gigs, buggies, and taxed carts.

Every vessel afloat exhibited her colours, and the rapidly-passing steam-boats, with their gay streamers "floating in the breeze," hovered about like so many fireflies, burnished

by the sun. In addition to these, every sort of craft that has been in requisition since the building of Noah's ark, was employed to convey persons to the sight, or to afford them positions from which to get a view of it.

The appearance of this dense mass of shipping was that of one mighty gallery erected on the water, with the colours of all nations flying over and around the excited crowd it contained. The heights in the neighbourhood of the town were also covered with people, all anxiously watching for the moment which should consign the magnificent Conqueror to her destined element.

Near the church at Greenwich, a triumphal arch, formed of flowers and evergreens, and surmounted by the Royal Standard, had been erected.

But the dockyard at Woolwich was the great object of attraction. In addition to the immense multitude admitted by tickets, and the still larger number admitted without them

at the gates thrown open to the public, every shed, housetop, and elevated place from which the smallest glimpse of view could be commanded, was occupied.

Before one o'clock the booths were crowded, and the scene was splendid in the extreme. In the centre lay the magnificent ship, in all her vast proportions, a stupendous, yet a beautifully-moulded fabric, which might well appear to bid defiance to the winds and the waves, and preserve her name against the world in arms.

Her decks were crowded with people. The Greenwich pensioners who had been present at the battle of Trafalgar, were ranged on the main deck. The dockyard men were busily employed in the various necessary preparations, and, in the intervals of the martial music, the hammering and cheering of the workmen as they knocked away the shores rose above the hum of the thousands around.

On all sides, towering one above the other to nearly the height of the bulwarks of the ship, rose the platforms, now thronged with a gorgeous assembly of rank and beauty. On the water, to the right, were several cutters belonging to the Yacht Club, dressed in their gayest colours. The government vessels, the steamers, and a whole flotilla of private craft of every description, were anchored before the dockyard, decorated with the flags, banners, and standards of all nations fluttering gaily in the winds—the Union Jack, that "for a thousand years has braved the battle and the breeze," floating triumphantly above them all.

These were crowded with dense masses of human beings; and not only on the decks, the bulwarks, the paddle-boxes, but in the rigging, hanging on by the ratlines, and perched upon every yard-arm and cross-tree, had those, desirous of an elevated position, taken up their station. Steamers, too, were

every moment arriving, while smaller craft of every description were shooting about amongst the fleets of larger vessels.

About two o'clock, a Royal salute announced the arrival of the Sovereign, and the Royal *cortège*. The christening then took place, the officiating priestess being a descendant of one of the greatest heroes England ever produced, and the wine used upon the occasion being the relic of the stock which Nelson had on board the Victory at the battle of Trafalgar.

Signals were now made for the boats, which were shooting back and fore, to draw aside. These were immediately obeyed. All was now anxiety, but it was of short duration. At the appointed time the last bolt was withdrawn, and, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, the crash of the bands, playing "Rule Britannia," the noble fabric began to move like a thing of life, and glided majestically into her appropriate element.

At about one hundred and fifty yards distant from the shore the anchor was dropped, and the Conqueror brought up in beautiful style, the bands playing the national airs, and the brave old tars upon her deck cheering with their utmost strength.

No sooner was this ceremony concluded than a large party of fashionables proceeded to Greenwich, to avail themselves of Lord Montressor's hospitality on board the Enchantress.

Here it may be permitted us to digress for a moment, while we express our admiration of the spirit manifested by some of the first nobles of the British Empire, in supporting that institution, which, whilst it at once affords a favourite amusement, is attended with real advantages to the country at large, by educating individuals, who, at a moment's notice, will not only be competent to enter our navy if occasion calls for it, but will prove an ornament to their profession.

In thus alluding to the Royal Yacht squadron, we cannot refrain from pronouncing a just eulogium on one, whose craft is a precious *Pearl*, and whose owner's name, the gallant Anglesey, is identified with the victories of Sahagun, Benevente, and Waterloo, and to whose influence and exertions, added to those of the noble Commodore, the Yacht Squadron owes so much of its celebrity.

We now return to our history. The fête, which had been so pompously announced by Lord Montressor, was looked forward to with the greatest anxiety, as it was supposed that the festivities would be ordered in a style of magnificence proportioned to the wealth and taste of the noble lord. Upon the deck of his yacht, Lord Montressor received his numerous guests, courteously deprecating, with proud humility, the universal admiration elicited by the splendour of his preparations.

Among the company present was a young buoyant girl, a cousin of the noble host's,

Fanny Montressor by name, who was just emancipated from a *pension* at Paris. She was about eighteen or nineteen; her complexion was of that warm-tinted fairness which is a charm perhaps more frequently to be found in the pictures of the old masters than in the nature breathing about us. Her eyes were beautiful, and dark hazel, and, with the rest of her features, which were full of softness and symmetry, gave to her expression, at once, grace and simplicity. When she took off her bonnet, and her rich chestnut hair, somewhat disordered by the drive down, dropped partially from its confinement, an amateur of painting would have believed that he gazed upon an animated Madonna from the hand of Leonardo. Her figure was of the middle size—full, but not over much so; and her step and movements and the tones of her voice spoke of nothing but frankness, gentleness, and joy.

This may appear too elaborate a descrip-

tion; but the light-hearted Fanny Montressor is destined to act a conspicuous part in my narrative, and a thousand circumstances tend to place her before me in minute distinctness.

There are always two sides to a picture; and although, undoubtedly, Miss Montressor possessed very many excellent qualities, she was one of the descendants of Eve, who had profited little by her first mother's first fault, for she retained the organ of inquisitiveness to an alarming extent.

Vavasour found himself at dinner by the side of the young girl. The insidious mention of her attractions by Lionel Crouch, with the view of disparaging those of another, whom Vavasour felt to be as far beyond all rivalry as she was above pretending to it, had excited in his breast a small degree of illiberal prejudice against the innocent offender. Her first appearance and manner, however, disposed him to do her justice, and he was

delighted with her archness and *naïveté*. She insisted upon his "fighting his battles" with the pirates and slave ships "o'er again."

"And now, Lord Vavasour," said Miss Montressor, "you must explain to me the different ships. I asked my cousin, Montressor, and he calls them 'all craft.' You talk of sloops, schooners, brigs, and frigates."

"Willingly will I instruct so enthusiastic a pupil," gaily replied the good-humoured sailor.

"I shall tax your kindness then, when we go up stairs," continued Miss Montressor.

"On deck—not up stairs; I beseech you," interrupted Vavasour; "or you will not do credit to your master."

The party now rose from table and went on deck.

We have already said that Miss Montressor had one failing—that *exclusively* female failing—if we believe the *exparte* assertions of the other sex — curiosity, so fatal to our first an-

cestress, but which was destined, on this occasion, to prove a benefit instead of a curse.

Among other objects which had attracted Fanny Montressor's curiosity, was a small curiously carved ebony box, which had been converted into a case for the ship's chronometer. Vavasour had previously noticed this, as he had almost every piece of furniture in the cabin, but a ship carpenter had so transformed all the antique furniture purchased from Elias Ramos, that scarcely a vestige of their former uses were visible.

After a somewhat lengthened dissertation upon the merits of the chronometer, Vavasour made a movement to depart, and Fanny Montressor, anxious to avail herself of her new friend's nautical knowledge, gladly accepted his invitation to escort her in the yacht's boat to the shore, where her carriage was in waiting. Fanny threw on her bonnet and shawl, and accepting Vavasour's arm had reached the gangway, when the giddy girl

remembered she had left her scarf in the cabin. To return was the work of an instant. No sooner had she done so than, prompted by her besetting foible, she felt a disposition to open a part of the chronometer case, which had hitherto escaped her observation. After trying every means, she was about to give up the attempt in despair, when Vavasour appeared, and told her the boat was waiting. In her hurry to seize her scarf, which had entangled itself in the elaborate work of the ebony case, and anxious not to appear to have been indulging in her usual prying propensities, she accidentally struck the lower part of the case, and in so doing touched a secret spring, when a small drawer flew open.

"Oh, how curious!" exclaimed the modern Eve, "and see, what a beautiful casket?"

Vavasour could scarcely believe his eyes. Rushing upon deck, he seized upon Lord Montressor, and literally dragged him into

the cabin. To open the casket, to find a parchment and a miniature which had been concealed in it, was the work of a moment. Vavasour opened the parchment; it fell from his hand—Montressor took it up—it was the marriage certificate of the late Sir Charles Callendar.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"There's a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,
When two that are linked in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing and brow never cold,
Love on through all ills, and love on till they die."

MOORE.

The same party described in the early part of our history were assembled at Harefield, when the sudden and hasty drawing up of a carriage at the door, followed by a loud ringing at the bell, announced the approach of an unexpected guest. All speculations as to who it could be were rendered abortive by the abrupt and almost violent entry of Lord Vavasour. His first words were addressed to Agnes.

"I bring you welcome news!" he exclaimed, seizing her hand. "Sir Walter," he continued, with such deep feeling, that tears started to his own eyes as he spoke it, "Mr. Walford, I am thankful you are here—how very blest I am to bring these tidings! . . . . but I have not told you yet—I cannot—it is this—" he added, carefully unfolding a parchment, and placing it as reverently as if it had been a sacred relic in the hands of Sir Walter, "this must speak for me."

"The certificate of Sir Charles Callendar's marriage," said Sir Walter.

"My father's marriage certificate!" exclaimed Miss Callendar, in a trembling voice that hardly exceeded a whisper. "Heaven be praised!"

She then stood for one moment as if bewildered and incapable of understanding what she heard and saw. Then, extending her hand to Vavasour, she fervently asked—

"How have you got this? And how can I ever show my gratitude?"

"I will answer the first question at more leisure," replied Frank; "and your uncle can reply to the second, if he will but advocate my cause with his lovely niece."

"Heaven bless you, my dear friend; and you, my beautiful girl!" exclaimed Sir Walter, clasping Agnes in his arms, and kissing her forehead in rapturous excitement; "fit in every way to adorn the station you are now called upon to fulfil."

We will not attempt to describe the feelings that occupied the breasts of this truly happy group.

Tea was soon prepared in that room where Vavasour had first beheld Agnes Callendar, and compared her unsophisticated beauty with that of more worldly charms. How changed was his position! He was then supposed to be an enemy to the house of Callendar. He was now its preserver and a happy lover. The

same moon seemed shedding her light through the shrubs at the window. The evening was chill, though one in early spring, and a cheerful fire blazed as before, under the gothic mantelpiece. Gelert, the favourite deer-hound, was also there, and the venerable pastor completed the picture of delighted memory.

Sir Walter conversed animatedly with Vavasour, both enjoying the perfect happiness of this evening's *réunion*. The worthy baronet now begged his niece would open the long sought-for casket. Agnes readily obeyed; and upon removing the lid it disclosed to her eyes a miniature; it was that of her mother! We pass over her emotions as she gazed at the portrait.

Vavasour, as our readers will easily anticipate, sought the first opportunity of an interview with Agnes, and, after reminding her of her former promise, pressed her hand in both of his, asking the very intelligible question:—

"Is it—is it mine, dear Agnes?"

"If you still wish it," she replied. "Can I refuse anything to the preserver of my mother's character?"

"Nay, Agnes," he said, in a spirit of perversity, "I will not owe to gratitude what I would fain owe to love."

Agnes paused, and fixed her beautiful eyes upon her lover's face for one single moment, with a look so imploring—so tender—so full of gentleness and affection—that it said better than any words could do, "I am yours, heart and soul!"

Vavasour read it at once: "Thanks, thanks, dearest Agnes," he continued, after a pause. "If you could tell all the agony and days of misery your rejection caused me, you would have pitied me."

"I did from the first, Frank—I did from the first," replied Agnes, earnestly, and blushing deeply. "Oh you know not what I felt,

forced as I was to crush every feeling, every hope—"

"Forced!" cried Vavasour. "Did Sir Walter then object?"

"Oh, no!" answered Agnes. "But I will explain it all. Do you remember the last day but one you called in Grosvenor Street, on that morning a letter was brought to me. It was to tell me that if I encouraged you in the line of conduct you were pursuing, you would be disinherited, and every acre of land would be left away from you; it hinted in terms, oh! so galling! that I was seeking by a wealthy alliance to patch up the broken fortunes of my house, and striving to force myself, an outcast orphan, into a noble family!"

"And why, dear Agnes, did you not explain all this to me?" asked her lover anxiously.

"Because, in the same letter," replied the ingenuous girl, "the writer declared that if I

revealed to you its contents, you would equally be disinherited."

"And do you think, Agnes, I would not have preferred a ruined fortune, a cottage with you, to all the wealth the world could bestow?"

"Frank Vavasour in a cottage!" said Agnes, smiling. "I think that would have suited Agnes Callendar better. But how could I have brooked the feeling of having forced myself into a noble family, or have brought myself to the other alternative of permitting such a sacrifice on your part? No!—if it had broken my heart, I could not have acted otherwise."

All thoughts of the past were soon banished from Vavasour's mind; for he and Agnes were left, by the ever-considerate Sir Walter, in undisturbed possession of the library for several hours of that day. But, as the wise *nothings* they said to each other are not likely to increase the reader's respect for

their understandings, we leave them to be supposed rather than recorded; suffice it to say, Frank had found a thousand questions to put to Agnes—a thousand wishes to express—gay plans to form and to propose—well remembered haunts to revisit in imagination—and a thousand memories to recall, trivial in themselves, but not the less dear.

On the joy and congratulations which succeeded the announcement of the approaching marriage between Miss Callendar and Vavasour, it would be superfluous to expatiate; it is enough to say, the lovers were truly happy. No thought of possible sorrow threw its shadow over the future; and, when Vavasour looked at Agnes—when he listened to the rich warblings of her delicious voice, as she sung his favourite airs, and remembered that she was his own—that a few days would see her his wife—the joy that swelled his heart was almost too mighty to bear.

Nor were the feelings of Agnes less power-

ful — the tears, however, that relieved her overwhelming emotion were, as she softly whispered to him, well worth all the smiles her past life had given her.

With eyes glistening with an almost paternal regard, Sir Walter gazed on Agnes, as she stood with Vavasour; and, as the group thus seemed united in one community of feeling, domestic happiness appeared again to shed her hallowed beam on the hearth of him who best knew how to deserve and appreciate the boon.

The thousand untoward circumstances that had attended Agnes's fate rendered all parties most anxious that the marriage of the now-acknowledged heiress and her lover should take place without delay; and, as both were equally indifferent to the vanities of the world, there appeared to exist no reasonable obstruction to their views.

But the law—that most learned and deliberate profession, whose delay is proverbial,

and which, throughout all seasons, drags its slow length along as if in defiance of human susceptibilities—generally seizes upon the occasion of a wedding to outdrawl its ordinary tedium. Defying the spur of Cupid, the jaded beast jogs on at its own dull and peremptory pace; and, let lovers sigh, or parents chide, title-deeds and deeds of trust, and deeds of entail, and "deeds without a name," must be perused, amended, and reindited; and much penmanship, and much parchment, and much pounce, and much patience, must be expended, before the matrimonial warrant can be signed, sealed, and delivered. Instead, therefore, of tracing the dull progress of Messieurs Allworth, Gray, and Pulsden, or that of their legal brethren who had the charge of making the necessary settlements, we will touch upon matters more attractive.

The first step of Agnes Callendar, on being reinstated in her rights, was to insist on freeing Sir Walter from his embarrassments; and

her prospects being now the brightest that his heart could wish, his spirits soon began once more to recover their tone, and he felt that his happiness was full to overflowing.

In a few days, the marriage was to take place; and it was Sir Walter's intention to celebrate that day in a manner becoming so important an epoch in his niece's life. Haselwood Court, the object of litigation for so many years, was, upon that morning, to commence a new era. It had once been famous for its open gates and truly English hospitality; and it was now again to merit its former reputation. Invitations had consequently been sent to all the neighbouring gentry; and a summons to all the tenants and the poor, to assist in making the old Court re-echo with the sounds of mirth and gaiety.

There was something that flattered the pride of Sir Walter's generous heart, in the

idea of once more collecting his neighbours, his tenants, his poor, his followers of every degree, and in presenting them to the future mistress of Haselwood Court and her affianced husband. As the day drew nearer, the "fine old English gentleman" fancied he could already hear the shout, the joyful acclamations, with which the young heiress's wedding would be hailed; he saw before him the gay groups swelling the sound of gladness; his heart warmed again with the recollections of his own youthful emotions; and, in the idea of beholding every one around him exulting and happy, Sir Walter already exulted, and was happy himself.

The portion of Haselwood Park, that was immediately contiguous to the house, had been gradually assuming an aspect of activity and bustle, during the week preceding the eventful day which now opens on our tale. Booths, tents, marquees, edifices of a yet more substantial construction, decorated

with green boughs, hung with garlands of flowers, bedizened with gaudy-coloured draperies, were now to be seen, ranged in regular order, upon the turf; or scattered about, separately, under the shade of some spreading tree. Haselwood Court and its inmates, in short, were treated, from early morning to nightfall, with just such a busy, bustling scene and noise as denote the approaching celebration of a country fair.

Few, however, of these fast-declining and degenerated remnants of old English customs could ever boast a site of equal beauty for their merry doings. In the true spirit of olden hospitality, whoever entered within the widely-opened gates of Haselwood, of high or low degree, rich or poor, was to be greeted with a hearty welcome and a substantial meal; and, upon the morning in question, hundreds were to be seen, at an early hour, passing through the avenue to the scene of gaiety. Fresh groups entered, one after the

other, upon a wide space of ground which had been purposely left clear, and was now overlooked by those who thronged the terraces and gardens.

A triumphal arch, streaming with gaudy ribbons, aud decorated with garlands of flowers, rose in the centre of the avenue leading to the village church, and at its foot some two hundred lads and lasses, sons and daughters of the Callendar tenantry, dressed in the perfection of rural simplicity, waited to escort the bride and bridegroom to the altar. Collected together at short distances were different crowds, from the midst of whom burst forth shouts of boisterous mirth, as the village heroes gave proof of their skill and agility in the various rustic games that were going on.

In another part of the park, on an elevated spot of ground, was to be seen a pyramid of faggots, already raised to a considerable height.

Such were some of the incidents that again gave life and bustle to the long silent lawns of Haselwood.

The day destined for the nuptials of Lord Vavasour and Miss Callendar dawned as brightly as the veriest slave to prognostics could desire; never did the sun shine upon a happier morning than that on which, with tears of joy, Sir Walter gave the hand of Agnes to the heir of Vavasour. As she stood at the altar of the village church, to exchange before Heaven and man those vows which bound them together for life, and which had so long been registered in their hearts, the immense concourse of people from every part of the country who crowded around them, and the happiness depicted upon every countenance, sufficiently manifested the satisfaction universally felt at the prosperity which, after so long a lapse of years, once again shed its beams upon the ancient house of Callendar. Again the halls of Hazelwood Court

were thronged with guests; and as the good "old English gentleman" saw his niece blushingly receive the honours now showered upon her, he fervently prayed that each succeeding year of her wedded life would find her still in the enjoyment of these blessings.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"*Rolando.* She's an angel.

"*Volante.* Ay, so are all women before marriage, and that's the reason their husbands so soon wish them in heaven afterwards."

Honeymoon.

Exactly seven months after the marriage of Madame La Comtesse Sandomir with Lionel Crouch, it happened, that at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, a very distinguished-looking group, consisting of two ladies, respectively leaning on the arms of two gentlemen, attracted considerable attention, probably from the remarkable beauty of both the ladies, who, though in different styles, were certainly two as lovely women as could be seen anywhere, and who, above all, were

mises à merveille. There was also another group parading the rooms at the same time, composed of the Countess Sandomir, Mrs. Brandleigh, and her youngest daughter, a hoyden just emancipated from Miss Giggleswick's polite seminary, Paragon House, Minerva Terrace, Pentonville; and last, not least, our hero Crouch.

"Surely," said the countess, "that is Lord Vavasour; but who has he with him?"

"Lady Vavasour," replied her sposo.

At that moment, the youngest lady of the first-mentioned party strolled into the furthest room, leaving Vavasour and his bride together. No sooner had the Tuft-hunter caught sight of the graceful figure of Lady Vavasour fixed before one of the wonders of Landseer, than he turned to his *carissima sposa*, and explained what a good opportunity it would be to present her to the newly-married Lady Vavasour. The countess was nothing loth, and they approached the spot

where Vavasour and his blooming bride were standing.

"Why, I declare," said Crouch, "there's Montressor in the next room."

The countess blushed up to her eyes, and rather kept back: but the Tuft-hunter was determined to gain his point, so, without further preface, he pushed forward, and extending his hand to Vavasour, said, "Let us exchange congratulations, and, perhaps, my old friend's wife will allow me to present Madame La Comtesse Sandomir. Lady Vavasour—La Comtesse Sandomir."

Mutual curtseys were exchanged, and a few smiling remarks made, when Crouch continued,

"Was not that Montressor I saw with you just now?"

"Yes," replied Vavasour, "and his pretty cousin, Fanny Montressor; they are shortly to be married."

At this the Countess Sandomir again co-

loured up, and, complaining of the heat, urged her dear Lionel to take her into the open air, which he accordingly did.

"Oh, Agnes, I am so very sorry I did not see the countess," said the laughing Fanny, now joining the party, which the Crouchs had at that instant left. "I must have one look; do, Agnes, lend me your *vinaigrette*, and I will offer it her from you."

Seizing her cousin Montressor's arms, she made her way through the crowd. "We shall never overtake them," continued Miss Montressor. After some exertion they did, however, succeed in overtaking the party of which they were in chase, just as they had reached the outer room, which was comparatively free from the pressure of the crowd.

"Crouch," exclaimed Montressor. The Tuft-hunter, recognizing the well-known voice, turned round and welcomed his former patron warmly. While mutual greetings were going on, and in less time than we can take to de-

scribe the circumstance, Fanny Montressor had begun to address the countess, offering her Lady Vavasour's *vinaigrette*, and adding her regrets that she should have felt indisposed. Suddenly pausing, and extending both hands, she seized the countess's, exclaiming,

"Oh, my dear *Mademoiselle*, how very long it is since we have met! What a trick Agnes has played me! She told me you were the Countess Sandomir, who I am dying to see, instead of which, I find my good, kind, though sometimes rather cross governess."

The countess blushed crimson; Crouch looked confused.

"Oh, *cielo!*" exclaimed the countess, throwing herself upon a bench, shaking back her ringlets, and looking as if she were possessed of an evil spirit.

"Speak, my love, Eugenie," said the agitated Crouch. "Solve this fearful mystery."

But the countess was speechless. There

was an arching and contracting of her brows, and a twirling and flashing of her eyes, and a contortion of her mouth, and a grinding of her teeth, which made her look a living representative of Medusa's head. She had gone off into a fit of hysterics.

Time and a tumbler of cold water brought her round at last. Poor Crouch gazed at his wife in speechless horror, and, calling up his carriage, hastily placed her in it, and ordered his servant to drive home.

No sooner had the countess reached home, than sinking into a chair she gave way to a passion of tears, which speedily led to another violent fit of hysterics. Crouch rang the bell: her own maid was sent for; and, stretched upon a sofa between open windows, and half-drowned in aromatic essences, the unhappy Eugenie lay for nearly half an hour, apparently unconscious of what was passing round her.

This interval was one of unbearable sus-

pense to the Tuft-hunter. At length she revived, and, after collecting her scattered senses, and considered what was best to be done, she proceeded to give her lord a somewhat exaggerated statement of her former life and avocations, dwelling as little as possible upon the period she had been a governess.

The Tuft-hunter in vain tried to regain his composure during this recital; nor can we report that he was ever afterwards himself again.

It is easy to wear smiles and look calm for a short time; but to continue seeming to love that which one hates, or respect that which one despises, is a most arduous undertaking. And such was the case with our hero, who now seemed to loathe the presence of the countess as much as he had before prided himself on it.

Affairs were going on in this way, when one morning they were seated at breakfast,

the countess was pouring over the pages of Galignani's Messenger, when her eye was attracted by the following paragraph.

"FATAL OCCURRENCE—We regret to announce the death of the Honourable John Emmerton, fourth Earl of Ledbury, who, with his two sons, was upset in his pleasure-boat, on the lake of Como, and were all unfortunately drowned before assistance could be procured. The title and estates descend to a distant cousin of the late lords — L. Crouch, Esq."

"What is the meaning of this, Lionel?" inquired the countess, throwing the newspaper over to him. "Who was the earl of Ledbury? and who is L. Crouch, Esq.?"

The Tuft-hunter, had he read the account of his cousin's death twelve months before, would, in all probability, have gone out of his wits with joy; but now, to find himself bound for better or worse to a *ci-devant* governess, was more than his philosophy

could bear. He dashed the paper from him with a violence that nearly demolished the countess's exquisite breakfast service—the only dowry she had brought to her loving husband!

The arrival of the late Lord Ledbury's man of business, to break to the new lord the "melancholy" intelligence he was already well acquainted with, put an end to the matrimonial *tête-à-tête;* and Lionel Crouch, or, as we must now call him, the Earl of Ledbury, found himself possessed of an unincumbered estate of twenty thousand a year, with a town and country house.

And here, before we proceed further, it may be necessary to enter a little into the birth, parentage, and education of the Countess Sandomir, now Countess of Ledbury. She was the daughter of a French milliner, Madame Louise Roland Jarasse; and, after a sort of half-and-half education at a suburban boarding school, where Mademoiselle

learned astronomy, mathematics, knitting, netting, knotting, the use of the globes, dancing, geometry, drawing, embroidery, flower-painting, botany, singing, geology, needlework, natural history, Italian, Spanish, and German, the harp, guitar, piano-forte, together with many other scientific accomplishments, "too numerous for the brief space of an advertisement," she entered the family of the Honourable Mrs. Montressor, aunt to Lord Montressor, as a finishing governess. After residing a few years with Mrs. Montressor, the youthful Fanny was sent to a *pension* at Paris; and Mademoiselle Jarasse having accompanied her pupil there, unfortunately fell in with the *soi-disant* Count Sandomir. Before leaving England, a correspondence had been arranged between herself and a former school friend, Miss Matilda Dodsworth, the second daughter of a rich East-Indian; and the following letter to that lady contains, perhaps, a more natural ac-

count of the progress of an event which it is necessary our readers should be acquainted with, than the most laboured effects of the historian could produce.

"My dearest, dearest Matilda—*Je reçois à l'instant vôtre billet*—You are right; 'there's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream;' and as 'we have been friends together in sunshine and in shade,' I will unburthen my soul to her, who 'in infancy' was the 'friend of my soul.' Oh, Matilde!

'Savez vous ce que c'est que l'amour?
Un amour qui devient notre sang, notre jour,
Qui, long-temps étouffé, s'allume, et dont la flamme
S'accroît incessamment en purifiant l'ame,
Qui seul au fond du cœur, où nous les entassions
Brûle les vains débris des autres passions!'

Such love I feel. But I will be as collected and calm as I can;

'Cease, flutterer, cease!'

"After leaving Mrs. Montressor's, I accompanied my dear pupil to Paris; there I met a

foreign count, tall and handsome—oh! dearest 'Tilda, such eyes, and such mustachios! Never can I forget his look. I felt

> 'As if my soul that minute caught
> Some treasure it through life had sought.'

He is, indeed, a noble specimen of a man! The very soul of honour—the perfection of what is gentlemanlike—at once the *beau ideal* of a husband and a lover. He is a Polish prince, and one who fought bravely for his country's cause. In spite of his noble birth, he is not the least proud. A week ago, he made me the offer of his hand and fortune. Mathilde, my heart throbs when I write the words. I accepted him. I told him of the thousand pounds my dear, dear, dear mamma left me; but Jorrefowier, such is my devoted lover's name, will not hear of any settlement being made upon him. Is he not a generous creature? Our marriage is to take place next week, at the English Embassy.

"The prince wishes the ceremony to be strictly private, and I cannot refuse him any wish. To-morrow I am to see the prince's lawyer; he has kindly offered to invest my funds, now in the consols, in a more profitable speculation. Keep my secret, my sweetest friend. If you hear my name mentioned, you may say that you have heard that I am to be married to a very handsome man, of great fortune and high rank.

"*Addio, carissima,*

"Thy own EUGENIE.

"P.S. Do not blame me for the clandestine step I am about to take. I feel bound by every law, human and divine, to leave undone nothing a grateful woman can do, with propriety, to secure his happiness.

"2d P.S. I forgot to say my affianced husband's name is Jorrefowier Piatreswesh Grabowe Sandomir. The Sandomirs are descended from King Stanislaus.

"3d P.S. The count (for, out of Poland, he drops his royal rank) has sent the Sandomir jewels to England, that Storr and Mortimer may reset them. He has a charming *château* near Paris; but love in a cottage, with Sandomir, would be bliss.

'My bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne;'

for, from the inmost recess of my heart, I feel the joy of such a calm, after the tempest that has hitherto ruffled my life—

'if it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy.'

"*Addio, carissima mia, a te in vita e in morte.*"

The Count Sandomir was in ecstasy at beholding Mademoiselle Jarasse; and, except when occasionally occupied in calculating how many francs her fortune would amount to, he devoted himself exclusively to her. He had already, as we have shown, made an

impression on her romantic fancy; and gentlemen of his character and education are in general not slow to perceive when the attentions they bestow have produced the effect desired. Eugenie, with the unfixed principles of an ill-taught child, the heated imagination of a premature reader of all sorts of books (excepting such as might have done her service), and the confused notions of one totally ignorant of the world, and of the station the *soi-disant* Count held in it, was lost in a mist of brightly-tinted vapour, that poisoned while it intoxicated her soul.

Count Sandomir was no novice in "affairs of the heart," and he knew well when to make display of his devotion, and when to keep it closely veiled from all but the unfortunate object of it. His assiduities to Mademoiselle Jarasse were of the latter kind, and, with the exception of one individual, his friend, a lawyer, the rise and progress of his suit were totally unknown.

The lawyer we have mentioned, after having carefully endowed the future husband with all the goods and chattels of his future wife, procured a special licence, and, before Miss Matilda Dodsworth could reply to her friend's letter, her attention was called to a paragraph in the morning papers, announcing the marriage, at the English embassy at Paris, of Mademoiselle Eugenie Jarasse to Count Jorrefowier Piatreswesh Grabowe Sandomir.

The honey (or rather treacle) moon, as Byron calls it, was passed in England; and it was during that halcyon period that the countess was first introduced to our readers at the annual civic festival. The progress of the newly-married pair, upon their return to France, has already been adverted to. After leaving Paris, they took up their residence at Bordeaux, where "circumstances" induced the count to forge some bills to a large amount. Discovery followed; and he was condemned to the galleys for life, receiving

the ornamental badge upon his arms of T. F., Travaux forcé; which, being interpreted into English, might be expressed, by interpolating three additional letters, thus:—T. H. I. E. F.

Shortly afterwards, Gaspar Schultens, for such was the count's real name, died; and the widow would have found herself penniless in the world, had not the blind goddess showered a benefit upon her, in the shape of a small legacy, from a distant relation. With this she opened her fresh campaign at Ryde, in search of a second husband.

And here, perhaps, it would be wise to suffer the curtain of our imperfect drama to fall, trusting that the imagination of every individual can readily supply the due proportion of health, wealth, and happiness, that the rigid rules of poetic justice would award to the respective characters. But as we are not disposed to part so abruptly from those with whom we have so long held amicable intercourse, we will proceed to state briefly

the outlines of what befel our *dramatis personæ* in after life.

Sir Walter Callendar was gathered to his fathers a few years after the marriage of his niece, but not before she had presented to the world two living proofs, that the honours of the house were in no immediate danger of being extinct.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans wound up her match-making propensities by taking to herself a second husband, in the person of a half-starved literary Irish lion; and, to use the Honourable James Galloway's phraseology, the last time we met them "they were both looking devilish cool and conjugal."

The loves of Fanny Montressor and her cousin have not made a sufficiently-important feature in this narrative to justify any lingering of the pen in describing at length the happy conclusion at which they had at last arrived. The "kind" reader may, however, safely indulge himself, or herself, as the case

may be, in believing this to have been exactly all they could wish it. Within a few months of the marriage of Agnes Callendar and Vavasour, Fanny Montressor became Lord Montressor's bride. From the church-door, the newly-united pair set off for Dover, and in due course reached Paris. Their residence in the gay capital was, however, not long; Italy was before them, the land of song, and eternal splendour. Thither they repaired, and in a few weeks found themselves most comfortably lodged in La Piazza d' Espagna at Rome.

Be not alarmed, sensitive reader! we do not intend to take the base advantage, after bringing you hither, of tying you to the skirts of a professed *cicerone*, and dragging you to all the sights of that "city of the soul." It is sufficient to have suffered such torture ourselves, without inflicting it on others. We shall only say, therefore, that the lion-hunter, Montressor, accompanied by

his youthful bride, entered regularly on a course of picture-gazing, statue-hunting, and searching after antiques; and that his lordship had the extreme felicity of having a work dedicated to him, in the following flattering terms:

"*Alla Sua Excellenza il Signor Conte Montressor. Protettore e Amatore delle Scienze e delle Belle Arti.*"

As it is barely possible that some of our readers may feel a little curiosity about the Honourable James Galloway, and the termination of his amours, we think it right to assure them that he was not always destined to be crossed in love; but that, although deeply wounded by the refusal of some half-dozen heiresses, he did, nevertheless, at an archery fête at Leamington, meet with a congenial piece of female humanity, who, after a few meetings at the rooms, a few rides to Stoneleigh, a few walks on the promenade, and a pic-nic at Guy's cliff, with the Honour-

able James as her escort, did, on the fourth week of their acquaintance, place herself and her ten thousand pounds at his disposal. Who she was, whence she came, or to what family she belonged, we are unfortunately unable to declare. Her name was Higginson, but a profound mystery enveloped her lineage. She had been a ward in chancery, but there was no doubt of her being now of age, and, in the tabby *coteries* of the Spa, she had the reputation of having her mind as well as her coffers amply stored.

Mr. Spiers pursued his course with unabated vigour and rapacity; but having been convicted of conniving at the forgery of a will, he was, much against his *own will*, compelled to visit a portion of the world with which he was, hitherto, unacquainted; and, on proceeding thither, by way of insuring him a settlement for life, he was favoured by a letter of recommendation from the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Of our friend, Lord Snarlbrook, we have little more to say; and heartily regret that we cannot take upon ourselves to announce his marriage, conceiving, as we do, that the order of Benedicts might well be proud of such an accession to their ranks, and that the ungallant practice of celibacy should not be sanctioned by so grumbling, yet respectable, an authority.

We must now take a last look at the career of our hopeful hero. From his earliest days, Lionel Crouch—we beg his lordship's pardon—the Earl of Ledbury—had been a groveller; his aim had been unworthy, his motives ignoble. He had aspired upwards; but, like Icarus of old, with his waxen wings, his flight had been frustrated at its highest pitch by the warmth of his affection for the *soi-disant* Countess. He had married her. This great point effected, she gave natural vent to her temper, which was unfortunately not of the mildest, and in the course of a very short

time, poor Lionel's earthly abode was no longer a *dulce domum*, and although but little more than a year and a month had elapsed since the rosy fetters had been riveted, he had fully experienced the truth of Voltaire's saying, that, "Un tel Hymen est l'enfer de ce monde."

Crouch had read of fates, and furies, and amazons, but, previous to his marriage, had looked upon them as ancient fictions; now, however, he had a living witness of their truth. He had too the bitter reflection that his wife was the daughter of a French milliner; had been a governess; and that her first husband was a convicted felon; that the Sandomir jewels were as false as dicers' oaths; and, finally, that the alleged chateau in France was, in reality, not situated in that country, but in the one adjoining it—that, in fact, it was a "chateau en Espagne!"

Such was the conclusion of our Tuft-hunter's career!—lifted suddenly to the summit

of all his worldly hopes, yet finding every one of them withered by the ill-fated union into which his tuft-hunting propensities had hurried him! Poor Lionel Crouch! with all his faults, follies, and infirmities, the reader will, perhaps, agree with us in thinking that the punishment was at least equal to the faults of—THE TUFT-HUNTER.

THE END.

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